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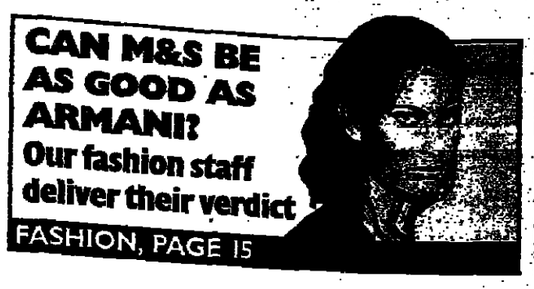

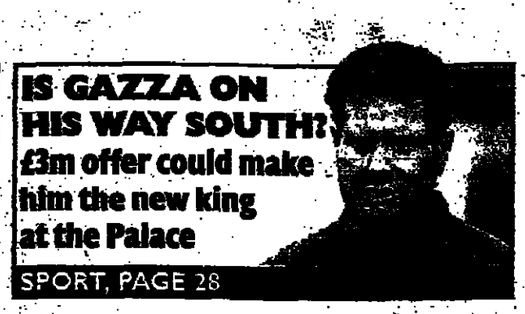

THE INDEPENDENT

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Wednesday 11 March 1998 45p (IR50p) No 3,555

80 hospitals on Labour hit list

Exclusive

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

THE GOVERNMENT is quietly pushing through a programme of closures and mergers involving scores of hospitals. A survey by *The Independent* has identified more than 80 acute hospitals in England affected by planned closures or transfer of services. In most cases these will lead to larger trusts with a full range of hi-tech specialist skills, but it will also mean patients having further to travel and will spell the end of many local hospitals.

A total of 32 trusts are due to merge on 1 April in the first wave but many more are discussing sharing services. The scale of the change is greater than anything that has happened in the last decade. A year ago, a leaked report in *The Independent* on Labour's plans for a programme of hospital mergers and closures drew fierce denials from the party and triggered a political storm.

Twelve months on, although proposed changes have triggered some local opposition, their extent has not been recognised. A quiet revolution is underway which has attracted little public or political comment.

A spokesman at the Department of Health said: "Ministers have made it clear that changes must be driven by local needs."

Stephen Thornton, director of the NHS Confederation representing health authorities and trusts, said: "There is hardly a health authority in the land that is not considering some form of reconfiguration of services. They are grasping the nettle at last."

The survey exposes the pressures on the National Health Service as it prepares for survival into the 21st century. Demand for savings to meet tight budgets is only one of the factors driving change. The pace of medical advance means that care can no longer be delivered safely from small local hospitals but requires the full range of specialties that only a large institution can offer. In addition, changes in working conditions – such as the cut in junior doctors' hours – mean some hospitals are struggling to provide 24-hour cover.

Typical of the changes are Manchester's plan to concentrate acute services at the 800-bed Wythenshawe hospital, which is to be rebuilt, leaving the Withington, currently with 600-beds, as a community hospital. There are similar plans in Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Durham, Derby and Leicester.

Reports by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Surgeons back the trend towards bigger hospitals serving populations of around 500,000 on the grounds that consultants with larger caseloads have higher standards of care. Christine Hancock, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said: "The public understands that in specialist units expertise grows with the number of cases nurses and doctors see. If we spread that too thinly, quality suffers."

However, critics say that the strategy is flawed. The Centre for Health Economics at the University of York concluded that there was "no good evidence" that increasing the size of hospitals improved outcomes, and Hay Management Consultants warned that 70 per cent of mergers failed to deliver the required benefits.

Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, announced in a speech last June that the NHS had to be reshaped to survive, with fewer trusts, an end to the duplication of services by neighbouring hospitals and more, basic care provided in GPs' surgeries closer to people's homes. Last month, following an independent review of hospital closures in London, he announced that most of the changes planned before the election would go ahead – with the exception of St Bartholomew's hospital which won a reprieve.

That has given the green light to other health authorities planning similar closures, mergers and transfers of services. Encouraged by the ending of the culture of competition, doctors and hospital managers have recognised that sharing services with a neighbouring hospital is a better guarantee of survival than protecting their own bricks and mortar.

Reports, page 6

Decision to free McAliskey made on political grounds

Exclusive

By Steve Boggan
and Andrew Buncombe

A FORMER Solicitor General warned the Government last November that the German bombing case against Roisin McAliskey would not stand up in court but it waited until this week to free her on "health" grounds.

In a private report sent to Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, Lord Archer of Sandwell, who served in the last Labour government, cast doubt on the evidence being used by the German police to extradite Ms McAliskey and concluded: "On the evidence available, it is most unlikely that the Crown Prosecution Service in England would initiate a prosecution."

Despite the clear pointers to Ms McAliskey's innocence, the Government chose to turn down the German extradition request largely on the grounds of her poor health rather than the poor evidence.

Last night, Mr Straw said: "I applied myself as I am required to do by law to the facts of the case and the evidence before me and I took no other considerations into account whatsoever." This conflicts with his statement 24 hours earlier in which he said the "medical evidence in her case would make the extradition unjust and oppressive".

Ms McAliskey's supporters criticised Mr Straw's handling of the case, arguing that the "honourable" course of action would have been to have publicly admitted the weakness of the German case.

Her mother, Bernadette, said Roisin's week-long detention at Castlereagh holding centre after her arrest in November 1996 – without being charged and without a solicitor being present – had severely damaged her daughter psychologically.

"Roisin is ill, and she is ill as a consequence of being arrested and detained in Castlereagh," she said, adding that she planned to sue the Government and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Ms McAliskey, 26, was accused of taking part in a mortar attack on a British Army barracks in Osnabruck in June 1996 in which no one was injured. While on remand at Holloway Prison in north London, she gave birth to a daughter, but her psychological condition has deteriorated rapidly, resulting in a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In his report to Mr Straw, a copy of which has been obtained by *The Independent*, Lord Archer, Solicitor-General from 1974 to 1979, takes apart the German warrant for Ms McAliskey's arrest.

The Germans allege that Ms McAliskey was "Beth", one of an IRA unit that stayed at a holiday home from 14 to 28 June 1996 while the attack was planned. Police said the owner of the home, Mannfred Schmidt, identified her from photographs – yet he has told television interviewers that he did not. Police showed Mr Schmidt three pictures of suspects, something Lord Archer says "seriously compromised" the evidence. Under the English police and criminal evidence rules, a witness must be shown at least 12 photographs.

"In an English court, evidence obtained as this appears to have been almost certainly would be ruled inadmissable," Lord Archer wrote.

The German authorities claim that two fingerprints found on cigarette packet foil inside the holiday home match Ms McAliskey's. But there is confusion over where exactly the foil was found, and Lord Archer points out that the passing of cigarette packets among smokers is not uncommon and could have happened in Ireland.

"If there were other evidence to be considered, the fingerprint evidence would carry some significance," he wrote. "But standing virtually alone, I doubt whether a UK jury would regard it as the basis for a conviction."

Lord Archer also highlights strong alibi evidence from many witnesses who say they saw Ms McAliskey in Ireland when the Germans allege she was in their country.

Roisin McAliskey's mother Bernadette: she blames her daughter's illness on her treatment Photograph: David Rose

£400m missing in water pension fund scandal

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A GROUP of public-sector pension fund bosses are today accused of crass incompetence, dereliction of duty, and conflict of interest in a scandal which could cost the public more than £300m.

In a devastating report to Parliament, Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General, also warns more than 150 public-sector funds – controlling investments of £100bn – to ensure they learn the lessons from the debacle.

The crisis-racked pension fund was one of three funds set up by the Conservative government as part of the privatisation of the water industry. The newly-privatised water companies' pension funds got £1.2bn in cash and shares, for 50,000 members in new employers' schemes; £221m went into a scheme for 10,000 employees of the National Rivers Authority (NRA); and £812m went to the 39,000 former employees who were left over.

This last scheme – the "closed fund" – got the worst deal, the poorest assets, and the problems, for which the taxpayer will pick up the bill.

Following examination of the events surrounding the creation of the industry's new pension schemes, Sir John's National Audit Office called on the Government to clear up the mess, ensuring benefits for the pensioners "while minimising the extent to which the taxpayer will have to fund any deficit".

But his report leaves two holes: the guilty men are not named; and in spite of the investigative might of the National Audit Office, which is allowed complete access to officials and files, the charge-sheet contains no categorical indictment.

By the end of March last year, the deficit in the problem fund had shot up from £120m to £419m.

Sir John says that when the water industry was privatised, it had been necessary to split up the old Water Authorities Superannuation Fund three ways. The report suggests strongly that the poor-relation fund, which was also run by the NRA, got the assets no one else wanted, including equity of £102m in Great Portland Estates – in potential breach of a rule that no pension fund should keep more than 10 per cent of its assets in unquoted securities. It was also handed a £27m stake in Charterhouse Estates Ltd, established in 1988 by the old Water Authorities Superannuation Fund and an unnamed "private entrepreneur". That company went bust in 1992.

The report criticised the NRA for appointing Queen Anne's Gate Asset Management Ltd as investment managers for the fund – without competition – because they had managed the old water authorities' scheme, and they had helped to divide the assets between the three pensions funds.

In today's report, the Government Actuary's Department blames the "closed fund" losses on a £100m fall in the "unbalanced" investment portfolio, and a £160m investment "under-performance", compared with investment returns on pension funds generally.

Leading article, page 18

Today's news

Plans to boost passenger power
TRAIN companies may be forced to hold connecting services for passengers under plans being considered by the rail regulator. Page 5

Lord Irvine under new pressure
UP TO 50 MPs have signed a petition calling for Lord Irvine's department to be scrapped and replaced with a Department for Justice. Page 2.

'Bad guy' ads make smokers quit
THE best advertisements for getting smokers to give up the habit are those that depict the tobacco industry as deceitful and manipulative, according to a study. Page 7

Pinochet weeps at end of an era
CHILE'S former dictator general Augusto Pinochet wiped the tears from his eyes at a ceremony marking the end a career in the Chilean army stretching over six decades. He is expected to be made a senator-for-life today. Page 11

Kosovo families' autopsies vow
RELATIVES of almost 50 Kosovo Albanians killed by police in Serbia's tense Kosovo region were allowed to inspect the bodies yesterday, but said they would not bury them without a proper, internationally supervised autopsy. Page 10

Butch the pig carves out a small place in eternity

IT IS A fine line – about to become pork chops one month, and hailed a national hero and immortalised in a statue at a historic cathedral the next, writes Kim Sengupta.

That is the latest achievement of one of the Tamworth Two – famous after successfully fleeing for life and liberty from a slaughterhouse.

Butch the pig has been carved on to a pinnacle to grace the 13th-century Lady Chapel at Hereford Cathedral as part of a £1m restoration plan. The cathedral is also home to Mappa Mundi, one of the earliest maps of the world, and last night the director of the cathedral's Perpetual Trust, Sue Embrey, said: "We now have a 20th-century legend alongside the more ancient legends depicted in the cathedral, it is fabulous carving of his face".

A monument to heroism

Butch and Sundance made a run for it as they were being transferred from a van into an an abattoir yard in Malmesbury, Wiltshire. They even plunged into the icy waters of the River Avon in their determination to escape. For days afterwards they were celebrated fugitives hunted by a posse of police, animal welfare officials and the media.

The duo were bought up by newspapers and will spend the rest of their lives in comfort at a sty with all mod cons in an animal sanctuary until they die of natural causes.

It is a happy ending, but not for everyone. There was in fact originally the Tamworth Three, including the one they left behind. He was " processed the usual way" and turned into sausages and bacon.

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INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 ● CROSSWORDS, P28 AND EYE P10 ● TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 ● FULL CONTENTS, P2

TOMORROW

■ Philip Glass: making music for Martin Scorsese and Mick Jagger

■ String quartets: the new tune army

■ REM: the secret of a hit

■ Help kids with homework, an indispensable series

EDUCATION +

CONTENTS

Blair urged to axe post of Lord Chancellor

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A call for the Prime Minister to axe the post of Lord Chancellor was made by more than 50 Labour MPs last night.

In a humiliating snub to the gaffe-prone Lord Irvine of Lairg, the motion urged Tony Blair to take advantage of the proposed reform of the House of Lords with a review of the executive role of the Lord Chancellor.

Sponsored by Robert Marshall-Andrews QC, Labour MP for Medway, the motion suggested "that role being undertaken by a Secretary of State for Justice within a Department of Justice, answerable directly to the House of Commons".

That would exclude Lord Irvine, who was appointed directly to the job in the Lords by his former legal pupil, Mr Blair.

The implicit criticism of Lord Irvine's conduct as Lord Chancellor – often seen as out-of-touch, if not high-handed and arrogant – is the more damaging because the motion has been signed by a number of new MPs who are not regarded as "usual suspect" trouble-makers.

They include Rhodri Morgan, who chairs the all-party Public Administration Select Committee, which recently called Lord Irvine to give evidence; David Hinchliffe, chairman of the Health Select Committee; Rosie Winterton, who was an aide to John Prescott in Opposition; and Charlotte Atkins, a former parliamentary officer with Unison.

While many MPs are dismayed by the insensitivity of Lord Irvine's expensive taste in interior decoration – running up a £650,000 bill for the redecoration of his state apartments in the Lords – last night's motion makes the more telling political point, that an unelected peer should not have so much power in a democracy.

In addition to his role as the most senior figure in the justice system, Lord Irvine also chairs a significant number of Cabinet committees, and is known to have upset a number of Cabinet colleagues by attempting to impose his views.

The Independent reported only last week that as chairman of the Future Legislation Committee, Lord Irvine had objected to a Bill to strengthen the regulatory system for the privatised public utilities, arguing that it was not a political priority.

That is known to have angered the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Bill will be in next autumn's Queen's Speech programme for the coming year.

However, Lord Irvine is also thought to have crossed swords with Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, over "empire-building" plans to create his own Ministry of Justice, at Home Office expense, and it is that notion that appears to have fuelled last night's backlash from the Commons.

While the attacks on Lord Irvine have been coming thick and fast over recent weeks, there is a strong suspicion among senior Government colleagues that much of the media attention was instigated by his suggestion that there would need to be some kind of privacy law.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that he will not have a privacy law of any kind, underlining the political innocence of the Lord Chancellor, but there is no question of Mr Blair sacrificing somebody he regards as a first-class minister.

Knight of the realm: Sir Paul Getty, the American-born philanthropist, and his wife Lady Victoria at Buckingham Palace yesterday after his investiture Photograph: John Stillwell/PA

Mortar attack is sign of Ulster escalation

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

THE LAUNCHING of a mortar attack on an RUC station city early yesterday is seen as an ominous escalation of the capabilities of republican renegades opposed to the peace process and the IRA ceasefire.

No one was injured in the attack, in which several mortars were fired from a metal frame which was described as home-made but well-constructed. Only one of the devices exploded, causing little damage, while another landed near some houses.

The attack attracted widespread condemnation, the critics pointing out that mortars have proved a notoriously inaccurate weapons which can spray missiles over a wide area. The police station attacked is in a heavily-populated area.

Sinn Fein leaders were quick to say they did not believe the IRA was involved. Gerry Adams, saying he was keeping an open mind on who was responsible, added: "I do not believe the IRA was engaged. Their cessation stands."

Security sources yesterday suspected, but were not totally certain, that the incident was the work of the Continuity Army Council, which opposes the peace process. The grouping has stepped up its level of activity in recent weeks with car-bomb attacks causing substantial damage to several town centres.

This attack is worrying for the authorities in that, if the CAC proves to be responsible, it will represent the first mortar attack ever carried out by a grouping other than the mainstream IRA.

The devices used in the Armagh attack were said to be relatively small and of an old design. This would fit with the theory that CAC now has in its ranks some activists who left the IRA around 1986, and who are using elderly though still potentially lethal technology.

Although most mortar attacks have not taken life, the weapon is one of those most feared by the security forces because of its potential to deliver explosives, without warning, into security force installations. One mortar caused the greatest single loss of life ever sustained by the RUC when a missile hit and demolished a crowded police canteen, killing nine police officers, in Newry, Co Down in 1985.

■ Two men were charged last night with the murders of Philip Allen and Damien Trainor, shot dead a week ago in a pub in the village of Poyntzpass, Co Armagh.

MP accused of polluting water supply

THE water supply from a farm owned by a Tory MP became contaminated when thousands of gallons of waste water were discharged in a field, a court heard today.

Michael Colvin, 65, MP for Romsey, Hampshire, and farm foreman Ian Hewish, 54, deny causing farm effluent to enter the water supply, which supplies 32 properties, on Home Farm at Tangley, near Andover.

The offence carries a maximum fine of £20,000 or three months imprisonment.

Magistrates at Alton, Hampshire, were told that 200,000 gallons of waste water were discharged, polluting ground water at a bore hole on the 855-acre farm.

Hugh Davies, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, said: "There was a concentrated discharge of waste water over a period of 36 hours in a site around the bore hole, which led down at some speed to the bore hole and polluted the ground water."

Mr Davies told the court the incident occurred over December 5 and 6 1996 and as a result standpipes had to be used.

On New Year's Day some of the standpipes froze and it was necessary to divert the Southern Water emergency supply to the bore hole. Residents were given a Recommendation to Boil notice from January 1 to February 17.

Environment Agency officers who visited the 180-cattle farm, owned by the MP since 1967, found evidence of slurry having been spread from a pipe about 200 metres from the bore hole.

When interviewed, Mr Colvin said he thought it was safe to deposit dirty water on adjoining fields. He believed the present system was adequate and he had not been prepared to carry the cost of irrigation or spreading machinery.

Ground Water Protection Officer Robert Barnes told the court he had found a fissure within chalk through which the water could have passed quickly into the ground water.

The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow.

WEATHER

East Anglia and south-east England will have outbreaks of rain at first. The rain may turn to wet snow over the hills before clearing later in the morning. It will then be bright and blustery with sunshine and one or two wintry showers. The rest of the UK will have a cold and windy day with sunny spells and sudden sharp wintry showers. The heaviest and most frequent showers will be in the north and west with some moderate falls of snow over northern hills.

Outlook for the next few days

Tomorrow will start bright and cold in southern Britain, but cloud and drizzly rain in the north will spread to all areas through the day. However, it will be milder and less windy. Friday and the weekend will be rather cloudy with weak fronts bringing drizzle and light rain from time to time, although amounts will be quite small. It will be fairly mild, but Scotland will turn brighter and colder for a time on Sunday.

British Isles weather

most recent available figure at noon local time
C,cloudy; Cl,clear; F,fair; Fg,fog; Hz,haze; M,mist; R,rain; S,sunny; Sl,sleet; Sh,showers; Sn,snow; Th,thunder.

Aberdeen	R	5	41	Guernsey	R	7	45
Anglesey	R	8	46	Inverness	C	7	45
Ayr	R	7	45	Ipswich	C	7	45
Belfast	R	10	50	Isles of Scilly	Dr	11	52
Birmingham	Sh	6	43	Jersey	C	7	45
Blackpool	R	6	43	Liverpool	R	7	45
Bournemouth	R	7	45	London	C	8	46
Brighton	Dr	7	45	Manchester	R	6	43
Bristol	R	8	46	Newcastle	Sh	3	37
Cardiff	R	9	48	Oxford	R	7	45
Carlisle	R	4	39	Plymouth	R	9	48
Dover	C	7	45	Scarborough	C	6	43
Dublin	F	12	54	Southampton	R	8	46
Edinburgh	R	6	43	Southend	C	8	46
Exeter	R	10	50	Stornoway	R	6	43
Glasgow	R	6	43	York	R	5	41

Air quality

Yesterday's readings

	NO_2	SO_2
London	Good	Good
S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for today

London	Good	Good
S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

INDEPENDENT Weatherline

For the latest forecasts dial 0891 5009 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

High tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	00:42	6.8	13:09	7.0
Liverpool	10:23	8.9	22:43	8.9
Avonmouth	06:12	12.4	18:37	12.6
Hull (Albert Dock)	05:27	7.9	17:38	8.2
Greenock	11:36	3.2	-	-
Dun Laoghaire	10:47	4.1	23:06	3.8

Height measured in metres

Lighting-up times

Belfast	18.19	to	06.47
Birmingham	18.04	to	06.29
Bristol	18.08	to	06.32
Glasgow	18.12	to	06.41
London	17.58	to	06.22
Manchester	18.05	to	06.32
Newcastle	18.02	to	06.30

Sun & moon

Sun rises:	06.24
Sun sets:	17.58
Moon rises:	16.21
Moon sets:	05.44

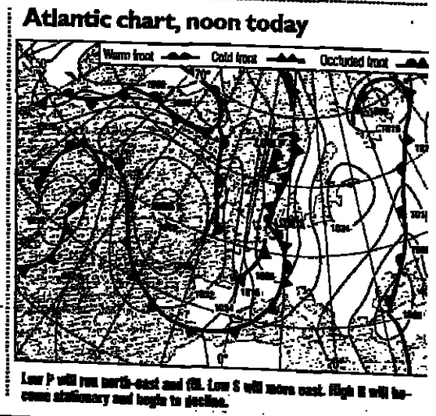
Full Moon, March 13.

World weather

most recent available figure at noon local time

Akrotiri	F	18	64	Chicago	Sn	-2	28	Lima	S	30	86
Alexandria	S	24	75	Christchurch	F	23	73	Lisbon	S	18	64
Algiers	F	15	59	Cologne	F	7	45	Locarno	D	10	50
Alicante	F	16	61	Copenhagen	S	3	37	Los Angeles	F	21	70
Amsterdam	C	8	46	Corfu	C	12	54	Luxembourg	S	5	41
Anchorage	F	-1	30	Dakar	F	24	75	Madrid	F	12	54
Athens	R	15	59	Dublin	C	11	52	Majorca	S	15	59
Auckland	F	24	75	Dubrovnik	F	22	72	Malaga	S	21	70
Bahrain	F	22	72	Faro	S	22	72	Malta	C	13	55
Bangkok	S	33	91	Florence	F	7	45	Majorca	F	25	81
Barbados	F	30	86	Frankfurt	F	5	41	Mexico	S	32	90
Barcelona	S	14	57	Funchal	S	22	72	Melbourne	M	30	86
Beirut	S	19	66	Geneva	S	5	41	Mexico City	F	24	75
Belgrade	C	3	37	Gibraltar	S	21	70	Miami	C	23	73
Berlin	F	3	37	Harare	F	28	82	Milan	S	13	55
Bermuda	C	22	72	Helsinki	S	-5	23	Montreal	F	32	90
Biarritz	F	13	55	Hong Kong	C	20	68	Moscow	R	3	37
Bogota	C	18	64	Honolulu	F	27	81	Munich	Sn	1	34
Boston	S	31	88	Innsbruck	Sh			Nairobi	F	2	36
Bordeaux	C	11	52	Istanbul	Sh	12	54	Naples	F	26	79
Brisbane	C	27	81	Jakarta	Th	31	88	Nassau	S	8	46
Brussels	F	8	46	Jeddah	S	30	86	Newquay	C	27	81
Bucharest	R	3	37	Jerusalem	F	13	55	New Delhi	F	25	77
Budapest	S	5	41	Jo'burg	F	25	77	New Orleans	S	10	50
Buenos Aires	C	25	77	Karachi	S	29	84	New York	R	12	54
Cairo	S	26	79	Kathmandu	S	21	70	Nice	S	12	54
Calgary	Sn	-16	3	Kiev	Sn	-1	30	Nicosia	F	19	66
Cape Town	S	23	73	Kingston	S	32	90	Oslo	S	-1	30
Caracas	S	30	86	Kuala Lumpur	S	34	93	Paris	C	8	46
Casablanca	S	21	70	Las Palmas	S	24	75	Peking	F	10	50
Perth	C	20	68				
Port Stanley	H	8	46				
Prague	F	0	32				
Reykjavik	Sn	-4	25				
Rhodes	R	17	63				
Rio de Jan	S	34	93				
Riyadh	S	18	64				
Rome	F	10	50				
Salzburg	Sn	0	32				
San Fran	F	14	57				
Santiago	C	24	75				
Seoul	C	11	52				
Singapore	C	33	91				
Stockholm	F	-1	30				
Strasbourg	F	7	45				
Sydney	C	23	73				
T'aipei	R	18	64				
Tel Aviv	S	23	73				
Tenerife	S	27	81				
Tokyo	S	9	48				
Toronto	R	5	41				
Tunis	F	13	55				
Valencia	C	18	64				
Vancouver	C	10	50				
Venice	S	10	50				
Vienna	Sn	-1	30				
Warsaw	C	6	43				
Washington	C	15	59				
Wellington	C	24	75				
Zurich	S	2	36				

Atlantic chart, noon today



Low P will run north-east and fill. Low S will move east. High H will become stationary and begin to decline.

WILLIAM HARTSTON WEATHER WISE

Some recent world weather news:

Washington: The first two months of 1998 were both the warmest and wettest on record. The average temperature in January and February was 37.5°F (3°C) compared with the normal 32.1°F (0°C). There was also an average of 6.01 inches (15.2 cm) of rain, nearly two inches more than normal.

California: Sunglass Hut International has blamed El Nino for a drop in sales in some areas. The Chief Executive, John Watson, said: "North America Sunglass Hut results, although positive, were negatively impacted by performance on the west coast due to unusual weather patterns in that region."

New Jersey: Gardeners are worried by the effects of El Nino on the biological clocks of flowers as mild temperatures are causing plants to bloom too early. "There'll be nothing left in late April," lamented Katie Porter, a New Jersey Garden Club member, "and if we get a heavy frost it'll be terrible". The National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington is scheduled from 29 March to 12 April, but the blooms are now expected to be over before the end.

Queensland: The worst flooding in seven years is affecting Australia's tropical north. Some towns are expected to be cut off for the next two months. The Queensland State Emergency Services district co-ordinator, Ron Crawford, commented: "It's a bit damp up there."

How my beautiful daughter was destroyed by mad cow disease

A father presents moving testimony to the Government's BSE inquiry. Science Editor **Charles Arthur** reports

TWO AND A HALF years ago, Clare Tomkins was a fit and active 22-year-old, "a stunning strawberry blonde, with a personality to match".

Yesterday, in a harrowing narrative, her father Roger Tomkins relived the agony of the disease which has left his "darling daughter" bed-bound and clinically blind, requiring 24-hour care because she is in constant danger of drowning in her own saliva.

In moving testimony on the second day of the BSE Inquiry, Mr Tomkins, an engineering director from Tonbridge, Kent, told how for months doctors and psychiatrists had struggled to produce a diagnosis for the worsening collection of symptoms – such as depression and inability to walk – afflicting his second daughter.

Clare, who is still alive, was eventually diagnosed in August 1997 as having "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (v-CJD), almost certainly caused by eating food infected with BSE, or "mad cow disease" – even though she was a strict vegetarian since 1985. After hearing her father speak yesterday, Lord Justice Phillips, who is chairing the inquiry into the causes of BSE and the events leading up to March 1996 – when the last government announced the existence of a link between the two fatal diseases – said: "I felt it was important that your evidence should be given at the start of this inquiry."

At the hearing in London yesterday, many other members of families who have lost members to v-CJD cried as they heard Mr Tomkins' description of his daughter's descent from her normal self.

Clare, her father recalled, had been displaying peculiar symptoms since January 1996, notably complaining of an odd taste in her mouth and worsening depression. But her family doctor, and subsequently a number of specialists, reckoned the cause was mental rather than physical.

More than a year after the Government had publicly announced the existence of v-CJD, and government experts had written to psychologists and psychiatrists to ask them to look for particular groups of symptoms, one psychiatrist treating Clare insisted that her weight loss, crying, numbness, agitation and erratic balance were caused by psychiatric illness.

Clare Tomkins (above) with her boyfriend Andrew before she fell ill with v-CJD. She is now blind, and needs 24-hour care to prevent her drowning in her own saliva. Left: Roger Tomkins, who told the BSE inquiry yesterday of his daughter's demise

Main photograph: Mike Gunnill

As the illness worsened in 1997, "her hands turned inwards, her feet too. She became knock-kneed, and her hips disjointed, so she could not walk", Mr Tomkins said. "She would make more and more sudden head movements. Her eyesight deteriorated and she cried constantly. "The worst thing," he said slowly, "was sometimes at night, when she would howl like a sick, injured animal. She started to hallucinate. It is now clear to me that she was tormented in her condition."

In April 1997, Clare ceased to recognise her mother, Dawn, and a few weeks later declared that "Dad is dead". Yet by this stage neither doctors nor psychiatric specialists had diagnosed v-CJD. She was admitted to a private psychiatric clinic which prescribed "reward therapy" in which she would be allowed treats such as watching television in return for raising her self-esteem by carrying out tasks such as washing herself.

"I couldn't see any reward that would be sufficient to motivate her," Mr Tomkins said. "But we were told that Clare had a psychiatric condition, in which she was torn between leaving home and staying with her family. The psychiatrist was absolutely adamant this was the source of the trouble." He was told that the family must not visit her for two weeks as part of the therapy.

Eight days after leaving her, he was told by the clinic that they had stopped the therapy because they were concerned about her health. Mr Tomkins and his wife rushed to see their daughter. "We were horrified at what we saw. We found Clare in a physically and mentally exhausted state. Her skin was covered in carpet burns and her whole body in tiny cuts. We were told she had inflicted these upon herself when she got so scared she hid under the bed. My darling daughter in her state of fear and anxiety obviously cut herself on the bed's springs."

> 'Sometimes at night she would howl like a sick, injured animal. She was tormented in her condition'

Clare was taken to the casualty unit of a nearby hospital, where Mr Tomkins insisted that the cuts should be catalogued. She was then admitted and cared for in an acute ward. "I haven't enough praise for the staff there," he said. Pointedly, he did not praise the private clinic's care.

Clare is now at home where her health authority provides constant care. "We are – I hesitate to use the word lucky – but fortunate that we have such a care package," said Mr Tomkins. "It is the very minimum that you need."

As he finished, one of the panel members asked him if he had any views why his younger daughter – and not any other member – had fallen ill, he replied: "I do ask myself that question every day. I look at people ... and ask, why my daughter? It's such a miniscule risk but it's happened, and the results are terrible. It's not just like dying. She has lived in hell for 18 months."

Doctors are still unable to say how long Clare will survive. There is still no cure for v-CJD.

'Blairmania' abroad as France goes mad for Tony

By Kathy Marks

TONY BLAIR received a nostalgic reminder yesterday of the adulation that he encountered in the early months of his government: not from his own electors, however, but from a French television presenter renowned for her steely appearance and formidable interview technique.

So enthusiastic are our closest neighbours about Mr Blair – whom they regard as a dynamic and forward-thinking politician – that commentators across the Channel have christened the phenomenon "La Blairmania". Tonight, an entire 90-minute programme devoted to the Prime Minister will be screened on France 3, one of the main terrestrial channels.

Yesterday the entire production team of France Europe Express, a weighty current affairs series, decamped to London to pre-record the programme, the thesis of which is: "Is the England of Tony Blair a model for the Europe of Tomorrow?"

After showing film clips of selected moments in the prime ministerial career – Tony being cheered by crowds in Downing Street the day after his election victory, Tony sharing a drink with Lionel Jospin, his French counterpart, while on holiday in France last summer – Christine Ockrent, the grande dame of French television, asked, by way of introduction: "What is it that intrigues us about Tony Blair? Is it his youth? Is it his style? Is it his popularity?"

To help her answer these searching questions, she was joined in the studio by a select panel of guests including Joyce Quinn, the junior Home Office minister, Lord Simon, the European competition minister, and Pierre Moscovici, the French minister for European affairs.

Nicole Notat, a union leader, declared Mr Blair "seductive". Jacques Seguela, a French spin-doctor, was even more effusive. "There is something of the Kevin Costner about him, or perhaps James Dean," he said. "He is a matinee idol."

Finally, the man lauded in France as one of the rare British prime ministers with a command of the French language arrived to be interviewed by Ms Ockrent and inquired, in impeccable French: "Can I perhaps speak in English?" As she looked up disappointed, he explained: "I don't think I'm altogether capable of tackling very complex subjects. When I talk to Prime Minister Jospin and President Chirac, I speak in English and they speak in French."

And so, for his grilling about the economy, the welfare state, foreign affairs and new Labour values, Mr Blair stuck doggedly to his native tongue. Despite this, he succeeded on several occasions in melting Ms Ockrent's glacial features into an expression resembling a smile. By the end of the interview, she was positively purring.

The Prime Minister's love affair with the French will continue when he addresses the National Assembly in Paris in a fortnight, the first British politician to be thus honoured. And what would he be telling French MPs, inquired Ms Ockrent. "I think we'd better wait until then," replied Mr Blair. "To be quite honest, my speech is still to be written." But he would address the Assembly in French, she persisted. "J'espère," he replied, flashing her a smile.

Mr Cute upstages the stars in his quest for perfect romance

IN THE NEWS

MAJOR MINOR

FOR some newspapers yesterday the big news from the BAFTA awards nominations was not the fact that *The Full Monty* was up for a staggering eleven gongs, nor that Rowan Atkinson's *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie* had been nominated for absolutely nothing at all.

No, the real story was that James Major, 23, son of the former Prime Minister, and Emma Noble, 24, a model and a hostess on the TV quiz show, *The Price Is Right*, chose the occasion to make public that they are now ... an item, **writes Tim Hulse**.

So devastating was the revelation that The *Sun* cleared a story about payouts from the Princess Diana Memorial Fund from its front page in earlier editions to make way for "Major son is dating telly babe Emma". A grinning Mr Major was pictured at the Planet Hollywood restaurant clutching Ms Noble around the waist.

"James is the first real person I've met in ages, he's wonderful. He's incredibly romantic – and so cute," cooed Ms Noble. "I was smitten the first time we met – she's gorgeous," gushed Mr Major, before adding with a somewhat ungallant note of fatalism, "I really enjoy her company, but it's early days."

They were, it seems, first introduced two weeks ago by a mutual friend at London's Cafe Royal, where Mr Major recently began work as a manager. "It has been a nightmare keeping this secret," Mr Major observed, although he was not asked why he had chosen to keep it secret or why he had now chosen to go public.

Mr Major is, of course, no stranger to secret romance. Less than two years ago at a party to celebrate a new Andrew Lloyd Webber musical he was pictured dancing passionately with Elaine Jordache, a divorcee 12 years his senior. This was shortly after Mr Major had "gone public" on his relationship with Ms Jordache, his supervisor while he was a management trainee at Marks & Spencer in Cambridge.

During the divorce case, Mr Major was named as the third party by Ms Jordache's husband, Michael, who described him as "an arrogant little prat who thinks he can help himself to any woman he wants because he is the Prime Minister's son".

Front page fling: James Major and Emma Noble at the Bafta party

The couple moved in together, but the relationship ended last May.

Ms Noble is herself no stranger to publicity. Last year she asked her lawyer to draw up a contract forcing boyfriends to pledge not to kiss and tell. The condition was that she would not have sex with them until they had signed. Ms Noble says she has not asked Mr Major to sign it because "I don't feel the need, I trust him completely".

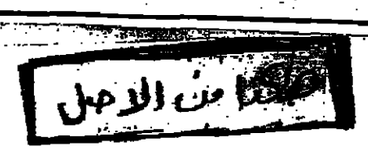
Ms Noble is represented by Neil Reading, a thrusting young PR in the Max Clifford mould. Yesterday the jury was out on whether it was Cupid or Mr Reading who had played the most significant role in the thrilling new love story of James and Emma.

SO JUST WHAT DOES HE SEE IN HER?
Martin Knowler told the *News of the World* of a "frantic" session in the sand dunes at Camber Beach in East Sussex with a 16-year-old Emma. "She was an absolutely fantastic lover." Robbie New, told The *Sun*, "If there was such a thing as being a perfect ten sexually, she was it."

AND AN ADDED BONUS
In June, 1996, Emma spent £4,000 to have her breasts enlarged from 34B to 34C.

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON?
Like his son, John Major enjoyed a long-term liaison with an older woman in his formative years, that is to say Jean Kierans. After five years he walked out and then met and married Norma. Could Emma Noble be the new Norma Major?

ROMANCE, MAJOR-STYLE
In 1995, he would take Jo Payne, a former girlfriend for romantic evenings at the Cock Inn and even showed her his terrapins. However, once he had taken her virginity, everything changed. "Afterwards he told me to get my clothes on and said, 'This never happened'," she said. "He just got up and walked out. James is a complete bastard and a womaniser."



Hopes of end to news price war

By Rob Brown
Media Editor

A GLIMMER of hope that the Government may take action to end the newspaper price war emerged yesterday when the Office of Fair Trading indicated that it is taking seriously the fresh complaint levelled against Rupert Murdoch's News International by rival publishers.

The director general of fair trading, John Bridgeman, has written to *The Independent*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Guardian* to request further information in support of their claim that the pricing policy of the *Times* is predatory. On the basis of such information he will decide whether a new OFT inquiry should be opened.

Mr Bridgeman said: "In the past we have dismissed other claims of predatory pricing but the issue continues to cause concern."

This is the second promising sign for publishers who claim that Mr Murdoch is bent on dominating the British broadsheet market through relentless price-cutting. Last month Labour peers defied the Government by joining a cross-party alliance in the Lords calling for an amendment in the new Competition Bill to deal specifically with newspapers.

Woman in black: Julia Lee, 29, who last night was set to become the first woman to referee the Oxford v. Cambridge rugby league fixture. She said: 'Doing the Varsity match is a huge honour' Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Train watchdog acts over missed connections

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

RAILWAY companies may be forced to hold connecting services for passengers under plans being considered by the rail regulator.

John Swift QC acted after concerns were raised with his office by consumer watchdogs who say that the present performance regime, which penalises companies that let their trains run late, means rail firms put profit before passengers.

The current system, say some experts, gives companies no reason to be concerned about passengers once they have deposited them at a stop.

Keith Webb, a director at the regulator's office, said: "What we are looking for is that train operating companies look beyond their narrow interests for network benefits."

A review of the fines system and connections will be launched in the next few weeks. New powers may see train operators' contracts being modified so that connections become part of the guaranteed minimum service passengers are entitled to.

The performance of some parts of the rail network has infuriated travellers. In the South West, the worst lines, according to the Rail Users' Consultative Committee, are the Swindon to Gloucester trip and the journey from Exeter to Barnstaple. On the latter, passengers from London use the Great Western service to get to Swindon and often see the connecting Wales and West train leaving the station.

Another connection that angers passengers is between Reading and Newbury in Berkshire. Thames Trains, the company that operates from Reading, will not hold the connecting train. "Thames say they will only hold the last train at night," said Sean O'Neill, a spokesman for the Western RUCC.

The view is not uncommon in the industry. Chris Garnett, managing director of Great North Eastern Railways, asked when his company took over the high-speed east coast route: "Are you looking after the interests of more than 300 people on a main-line train or the dozen or so who may be joining from a two-car diesel train from somewhere else?"

However, this view has not impressed passenger watchdogs. The RUCC for Wales pointed out that passengers travelling west from Swansea who miss their connecting train face a three-hour wait.

In its annual report, the Welsh passenger watchdog, said that there were "inadequate" provisions for connections and that catering for them was "unacceptably omitted".

Critics of privatisation seized on the regulator's actions as evidence that the train companies are failing to deliver. "There is nothing more frustrating for passengers than seeing their connection pull out of the station just as the train they are on arrives. Yet on our 'Balkanised' rail network it happens all the time," said Jonathan Bray, campaigns director for Save Our Railways.

A spokesman for the Association of Train Operating Companies (Atoc), which represents the passenger parts of the private railways, said many firms rely on connecting services for passengers. David Campbell-Bannerman, a director with Atoc, said: "On Virgin's Cross-Country service more than 40 per cent of passengers originated from another company."

Wealth fails to buy a passport to literacy

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

MANY people in the most affluent parts of Britain cannot read properly or deal with the simplest sums, according to the most detailed survey of basic skills produced in Britain.

Even in Richmond in west London or Farnham in Surrey, 10 per cent of people could not correctly answer simple reading questions; a quarter could not deal with basic maths, the Basic Skills Agency said. In the worst areas, like Tower Hamlets in London and Knowsley in Liverpool, 25 per cent have trouble reading and between 40 and 50 per cent could not deal with simple mathematical problems.

Sir Claus Moser, the agency chairman, condemned the situation as "a double scandal for a civilised country". He said: "Somewhere between 15 and 20 per cent of adults have very low levels of literacy; that is in the order of 6 million to 8 million adults.

"It's an enormous barrier to economic success and an enormous barrier to social inclusion. The figures are bad enough in themselves but they exclude people who cannot read or write at all, so the estimates are on the conservative side."

A council-by-council breakdown produced by the agency shows the worst problems in London, the North-west and the North-east. But even across Middle England up to a third of people needed help with basic maths and up to 13 per cent needed help with reading. The breakdown, the first of its kind, was based on a survey of 8,000 people aged between 16 and 60.

They were given simple reading tests, such as finding a 24-hour plumber from the Yellow Pages, understanding a simple letter or recognising the words "fragile – handle with care" on the side of a box. The maths test included adding up the cost of a loaf of bread and two tins of soup, reading a train timetable and working out the floor area of a room.

Basic Skills Agency director Alan Wells said the results, which only included people educated in Britain, would give colleges and local authorities the first accurate breakdown of educational problems. He said local targets would be needed to help improve standards.

Mr Wells said people with poor English and maths spent five times longer on the dole as people with average skills. He said: "I know of people who always say they have forgotten their glasses when required to read something, or pretend to have their arm bandaged when they are supposed to write something down."

The survey backs government plans to promote the Three Rs in schools and colleges. The Green Paper on lifelong learning, published last month, proposed doubling to 500,000 the number of people offered help with basic skills each year. Key skills are also a central feature of the Government's New Deal for long-term unemployed. Ministers are also planning basic-skills summer schools for adults before the start of the national year of reading in September.

Mr Wells said: "Even if the strategy in primary schools works it will take several years. For those who have already left junior school they will be marooned as the parade moves by. If we are going to improve the capacity of adults in the community and reduce the number struggling we will have to have some comprehensive and challenging targets."

Councils with the best and worst levels of reading and writing

* The 10 councils with the highest numbers of people with poor levels of literacy are (%):

Tower Hamlets	24.4
Knowsley	22.3
Newham	21.8
Barking and Dagenham	21.6
Hackney	21.5
Leicester	21.0
Southwark	20.9
Corby	20.8
Sandwell	20.7
Liverpool	20.5

* The 10 local authorities with the lowest numbers of people with poor literacy scores are:

Hart (Hampshire)	9.0
Wokingham	9.1
South Cambridgeshire	9.6
Uttlesford	9.7
Surrey Heath	9.7
South Bucks	9.7
Tandridge	9.8
Mole Valley	9.8
Waverley	9.8
Chiltern	9.9

Figures relate to the percentage of people with low or very low levels of literacy.

Fury at plans to close hospital

Rob Easton, a cancer patient, with his son Raef and wife Beverley. He says Raef would not be able to visit him if the Kent and Canterbury closes Photograph: Rui Xavier

By Jeremy Laurance and Rosa Prince

A BITTER war is being fought in rural Kent which has pitted patients and hospital consultants against health authority managers over proposals to close the Kent and Canterbury hospital, one of three serving the east of the county.

The dispute has become so vicious that one of the key players has received anonymous phone calls threatening his family. But it is mirrored – in its content if not in its bitterness – in arguments in health authorities across the country, as shown in our list of hospitals where change is threatened. The total is certain to be an underestimate as similar discussions are being held in almost every health authority.

In Kent, pleas from Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, for collaboration in place of competition – the previous government's lever for change – have fallen on deaf ears. Local people are left frightened and confused.

Maureen Hoskins, 55, who comes from Birchington near Margate every day for treatment for pelvic cancer, said she was furious at the proposed closure of the cancer unit at the Kent and Canterbury and its transfer to Maidstone, a 60 mile, hour-long drive away. "It's obvious," she said. "If they move the cancer unit to Maidstone, I will die. How will I get there? Who will bring me? This isn't pleasant treatment. You get diarrhoea, cystitis, you are sick."

Her husband, Bill, already takes half a day off every day to drive her the 26 miles to Canterbury and Kent and would not be able to take her to Maidstone. He said: "At the moment, we just about get home after the treatment before Maureen's pain begins. She couldn't manage a longer drive."

East Kent Health Authority says that to provide safe, high quality medical care, resources must be concentrated in two of the three existing hospitals – the 500-bed William Harvey in Ashford, and the 460-bed Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in Thanet, which are in the major centres of population. A spokeswoman said: "This is not about money, it is about safe working. It is about making better use of manpower and getting the best health care for people."

Local consultants in Canterbury insist that all three hospitals can be kept open, reneging – according to the health authority – on their earlier acceptance that one hospital must close.

Dr Jim Appleyard, consultant pediatrician at the Kent and Canterbury, said: "We are not whipping up anger we have just gone to local people and told them what is planned. The fact that the cancer service is being moved makes them very angry."

Rob Easton, 39, stays at the Kent and Canterbury for five days every three weeks having chemotherapy for testicular and lung cancer. His wife Beverley, and 22-month-old son Raef, visit him every day. Mr Easton, who lives in Canterbury, says if the unit moves to Maidstone, it would be too far for his son to visit. He says: "I would miss the cuddles and his smile. I am a very hands-on parent. I would miss that so much."

Changing face of the health service

NORTH WEST REGION

Morecambe Bay: Five hospitals – Furness General, Queen Victoria, Royal Lancaster Infirmary, Ulverston and Westmorland General – in three acute trusts to merge into one. Morecambe Bay Hospitals NHS Trust, from April. Two community trusts to merge.
South Lancashire: Southport and Ormskirk hospitals. One to become acute hospital and the other a community hospital but the health authorities cannot agree which should be which. Awaiting decision by Secretary of State.
Manchester: Withington and Wythenshawe hospitals. Wythenshawe to be rebuilt as main acute hospital and Withington to be community hospital. Negotiations in progress under the Private Finance Initiative. Manchester Royal Infirmary to be re-built under PFI scheme with specialist children's unit. Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and Booth Hall Children's Hospital will then close. Approved by former health secretary Stephen Dorrell in March 1997.
Bury: Consultation to start on plans to close Bury General Hospital and centralise services on Fairfield General.
Rochdale: some services at Burge Hill Hospital to move to Rochdale Infirmary.

NORTHERN AND YORKSHIRE

Newcastle: Freeman and Royal Victoria Infirmary to merge. Ministerial decision imminent.
Durham: Five trusts to merge into three from April. Darlington Memorial, Bishop Auckland, North and South Durham acute trusts to become two: North and South Durham Health Care Trusts. A third trust, Durham County Priority Services, will cover mental health and learning disabilities throughout the county.
Leeds: St James University Hospital and Leeds General Infirmary – major review of services.
Gateshead: Proposed merger of Queen Elizabeth Hospital and St Mary's Hospital, Morpeth, put on hold at request of health minister Alan Milburn. He asked the two trusts to look again at the options.
North Tyneside: Merger of North Tyneside Trust and two community trusts under discussion.

TRENT

Derby: Derbyshire Royal Infirmary and Derby City General to merge from April, with the City to become main acute site.
Lincolnshire: Service review with proposed closure of some community hospitals out to consultation. Also sharing of services among the eight trusts and the two main hospitals, the Boston Pilgrim and the Lincoln County.
Leicester: Review of services at Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester General and Glenfield hospitals.
South Humber: Review of services at Scunthorpe and Grimsby hospitals going out to consultation.

WEST MIDLANDS

Birmingham: Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth hospitals to close and be replaced by new building on University Hospitals site. Consultation on reconfiguring services among City Hospital, Royal Orthopaedic, Heartlands and University Hospitals ended this month (2 March).
Worcestershire: Proposed new hospital in Worcester as main acute centre, Kidderminster General Hospital to become out-patient and day surgery centre, Alexandra Hospital, Redditch to specialise in urology and orthopaedics. Consultation opened this month.
Rugby: Consultation on proposed merger of Rugby and Walsgrave NHS Trusts ended last month. Main acute hospital at Walsgrave will share surgeons with St Cross Hospital. Awaiting decision by Secretary of State.

ANGLIA AND OXFORD REGION

Oxford: Plans to close Radcliffe Infirmary in town centre and move work to John Radcliffe Hospital on outskirts under discussion.
Ipswich: Ipswich General Hospital and West Suffolk General Hospital, Bury St Edmunds to share services.

NORTH THAMES

Stevenage: Lister Hospital in discussions on sharing services with Queen Elizabeth II Hospital at Welwyn Garden City.
Enfield: Chase Farm Hospital in discussion on sharing services with North Middlesex and New Barnet hospitals. Edgware to become a community hospital.
Essex – three maternity hospitals, in Braintree, Harwich and Clacton, to close.
North London: New building to bring together University College Hospital, the Middlesex, Hospital for Tropical Diseases and the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson.
East London: plans to save St Bartholomew's Hospital by making it a specialist cancer and heart hospital to go out to consultation. Royal London Hospital to be rebuilt. Proposal to build new hospital at Oldchurch and close Harold Wood to go out to consultation.
West London: Services to be shifted from Queen Charlotte's to Hammersmith.

SOUTH THAMES

South London: Plans to switch services from Guy's to St Thomas's to be re-evaluated.
Acute services to be switched from Queen Mary's, Roehampton, to Kingston and St George's hospital. Queen Mary's to become community hospital.
Services to be shifted between St George's and Atkinson Morley hospital.
New Queen Elizabeth Hospital to be built under PFI scheme at Greenwich.
East Kent: One of Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford hospitals to close and work to be transferred to remaining two. Consultation ends on 8 May.
West Kent: Hospitals in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Dartford to share services.
Surrey: East Surrey and Crawley hospitals to merge. Ashford and St Peter's hospitals to merge.

SOUTH AND WEST

Bristol: Review of management at Frenchay and Southmead hospitals.
Cornwall: Proposed closure of four of ten community hospitals at Saltash, Fowey, St Ives and Poltair and changes to number of beds in the remainder.
Review of management at Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust (Treliske hospital) to be completed later this year.

Child abuse team told to balance truth against cash

By Roger Dobson

INSURERS warned child abuse investigators that a balance had to be struck between truth and financial interests, it has been revealed at the North Wales abuse tribunal.

They also demanded to see a report of an abuse inquiry team before publication, warned that insurance cover could be removed, insisted on vetting comments and statements, and at one point complained about files being released to the police.

And when independent investigators wanted to advertise their inquiry so that victims of abuse would know they were there, the insurers replied: "Such notices only encourage a bandwagon of claims together with adverse publicity."

A letter to John Jillings, who chaired the last inquiry into allegations of abuse and who had wanted to place the advertisements, said: "While I have a great deal of sympathy with the aims of your panel ... a balance has to be struck between the need to seek the truth and the necessity for the county council and ourselves to protect financial interests."

The insurers also objected to the setting up of one inquiry, saying it was a dress rehearsal for compensation claims and adding: "We are concerned to avoid stirring up complaints particularly as two of the ring leaders have given up."

The insurers also warned Clwyd against implicating other agencies: "As you know, your insurers are interested as insurers of other social service authorities, the North Wales Police, and other public bodies, and will not be pleased if there is an attempt merely to shift blame."

Gerard Elias QC, counsel for the tribunal, outlining the role of the insurers, said, "We submit that some of the insurers' directives, for that's what they appeared to be, went well beyond that which was proper for a commercial organisation seeking to advise one or its clients or protect its own financial interests."

The tribunal was told that the insurers were the Municipal Mutual, some of whose affairs were taken over by Zurich Municipal. John Goldring QC, counsel for the insurers, said, "They accept that in hindsight ... the tone of the correspondence was at times intemperate and went too far in the demands made of the council."

■ The tribunal is to investigate the financial affairs of a jailed paedophile who was paid £28m for looking after children and who claims he has no money to pay for legal representation at the hearings

John Allen, who ran the Bryn Alyn Community, had claimed that he does not have sufficient funds to pay for legal representation at the tribunal, leaving the Welsh Office to pick up the bill.

But Allen, who once had an address in Harley Street and who was drawing an income of £200,000 a year, will now have his finances probed following the granting of an injunction.

Hotelier takes on beef ban in court

A hotelier who allegedly served beef on the bone yesterday went to court to prove that the regulations banning the product were "absurd".

James Sutherland, 44, (right) is the first person in Britain to be prosecuted under the rules. More than 100 farmers turned out in support when he arrived at Selkirk Sheriff Court in the Scottish Borders.

The hearing was adjourned to next month.

We were robbed, say footballers

Police were last night hunting thieves who escaped with watches, cash, credit cards and mobile phones from the changing room at Coventry City's training ground.

Detectives said personal items belonging to 10 first team players were taken from the Sky Blue Lodge at Ryton-on-Dunsmore.

A police spokesman said the "walk-in theft" happened between 11.30 and 11.40am today as the squad were training.

The thieves entered through an insecure rear door and stole property with an estimated value of at least £10,000.

Rape appeal

A TEENAGE rape victim last night waived her right to anonymity in an attempt to catch her attacker. Lisa Hunter, 17, who lives with her sister who is a serving member of the Army, was attacked at 4am on Saturday near Dreghorn Barracks, Edinburgh. Her attacker was around 20, with a shaved head and bushy eyebrows. He spoke with a local accent, wore light trousers and a dark puffed jacket. Police appealed for witnesses, particularly the driver of a black taxi who dropped Ms Hunter at a Safeway car park. The Army issued a warning to women that this was the third assault in the area in six weeks.

Anger at South Bank

SIR BRIAN Corby is expected to announce today that he will be standing down as chairman of the South Bank Centre in London. Sir Brian is known to have been angered by the failure of the Arts Council and Secretary of State for Culture, Chris Smith, to approve lottery cash for a £131m development plan, with a glass roof covering the Royal Festival Hall, Hayward Gallery and other parts of the centre. Sir Brian said recently: "We are feeling very angry ... Many board members have worked prodigiously hard and having cleared, as they thought, the last hurdle, they are fed up."

— *David Lister*

Rail workers killed

An inquiry was under way yesterday after two workers were killed as they carried out maintenance on a railway line.

The men died instantly when they were struck by the 0824 Wales and West Services train from Portsmouth to Swansea at the Ebbw Junction near Newport. Inspector Peter Murphy of British Transport Police said: "A warning was given. All but two responded to the warning." The two men were from the South Wales area.

Revealed: secret of how to help smokers quit

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

THE BEST advertisements at getting smokers to give up the habit are those that depict the tobacco industry as deceitful and manipulative, according to a study.

Suggesting tobacco industry executives are dishonest and will go to any lengths to hook new smokers is the most effective way of persuading people to stop buying cigarettes.

The findings, published today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, follow claims that British American Tobacco misrepresented the findings of a World Health Organisation study by suggesting it showed no increased risk of cancer from passive smoking.

Yesterday, Tessa Jowell, the public health minister, rounded on the industry and rejected its claim that passive smoking was safe. Speaking at a launch for tomorrow's No Smoking Day, Ms Jowell said: "BAT have a vested interest in keeping people smoking. They have to replace the 120,000 people a year who die from smoking with new customers. As the authors of the study made clear, it was grossly misrepresented by the tobacco industry who had their own particular spin to put on it."

Researchers at the University of California in San Francisco, who reviewed studies of the effectiveness of anti-smoking advertising, say the image of the tobacco industry in the public mind is key to the continued legitimacy of smoking.

They say: "The type and target of anti-tobacco advertising messages matter. Its strategy denormalises smoking and delegitimises the tobacco industry. By showing to what lengths the industry will go to recruit and keep new smokers, these advertisements have sparked interest in smoking and opened people's minds to other anti-tobacco messages."

An anti-smoking campaign run in California which denigrated the tobacco industry led to a 12.2 per cent drop in smoking in the 12 months from April 1990 to March 1991. The researchers say the campaign directly influenced 33,000 smokers who gave up and contributed to the decision to quit made by a further 173,000.

They say that advertisements which focus on health effects of smoking, or suggest it can lead to romantic rejection, have little impact.

■ The health service is doing too little to help people stop smoking, the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at the University of York says.

The centre, set up with government funding to advise on best clinical practice, says doctors and other health professionals should systematically identify patients who smoke and urge them to stop.

Walking heads: Models Jane Spencer, right, and Larissa Ivanova bring a touch of colour to the streets of central London yesterday at a fashion shoot to raise funds for the NCH Action for Children charity. The hats are the creations of royal milliner Frederick Fox Photograph: John Stillwell

Company drivers sleep at the wheel

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

COMPANY car drivers are frequently falling asleep at the wheel, according to a survey launched yesterday.

Almost a quarter have felt drowsy or have nodded off, while 18 per cent said stress "affected" their driving.

The survey by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Rospa) also found that 17 per cent of those who drive for a living are concerned about the safety implications of the hours they spend on the road.

Despite the revelations, motoring organisations gave the findings only a qualified welcome.

"We should get this into perspective. Company car drivers are no less safe than other motorists, they just drive longer," said an RAC spokesman.

However, many experts support the study. "People forget how stressful driving can be. After all if you work in a factory for long hours and become unsafe, your employer is required to take you off the job. But get into a car and nobody bothers," said Jim Horne, who runs the sleep laboratory at Loughborough University.

Rospa believes that people driving as part of their job are likely to be linked with more than a quarter of Britain's 3,600 annual road fatalities.

"Accident rates among fleet vehicle users have been estimated to be 30-40 per cent higher than among private car users, but driver training can reduce accident rates by almost twice that amount," said Rospa occupational safety adviser Roger Bibbings.

The findings come as Rospa publishes a Managing Occupational Road Risk guidance booklet.

Dicing with death

There is, roughly, one death per 15 million car trips in the UK. Here are seven activities that also lead, on average, to one death, in order of danger:

Two million cigarettes smoked per death from lung cancer
Three million acts of unprotected sex per death from Aids
Four million bicycle rides per cyclist killed
10 million flights on a jet aircraft per passenger fatality
25 million beef steaks eaten per death from CJD
30 million walks in the rain per death by lightning
75 million trains boarded per train-crash death

DAILY POEM

From A to B and Back Again

By Michael Hofmann

The Northern Line had come out into the open,
was leaving tracks like a curving cicatrice.
There was Barnet, my glottal stop, trying hard
to live up to its name, colloquial and harmless and trite.

The place was sunny and congested, brick and green trim,
it had the one-of-everything-and-two-butchers
of a provincial town. First, I dropped into
the maternity hospital by accident ...

The porter was an analphabete, but together
we found your name, down among the Os,
and there you were, my brave love,
in a louse hospital gown that covered nothing;

pale; on an empty drip; and eager to show me
your scars, a couple of tidy crosses
like grappling hooks, one in the metropolis,
the other some distance away, in the unconcerned suburbs.

Our Daily Poems until Friday come from Penguin Modern Poets 13 (Penguin, £7.99), which will be the last volume in this influential series. It contains a selection from the work of Michael Hofmann, Michael Longley and Robin Robertson, chosen by the poets themselves.

Council tax rise is double the rate of inflation

By David Walker

ALTHOUGH council tax is set to rise next month by double the rate of inflation, increases are less than they would have been had councils not made considerable savings on their 1998-99 budgets, some of them involving painful cuts in social-care programmes, libraries and repairs.

The 8.5 per cent average – 12 per cent in Wales – also reflects the determination of Labour councillors not to embarrass the Blair regime. In London and the metropolitan districts, councillors have made a special effort to keep taxes down because 1998 is an election year. Long-suffering council tax payers in Lambeth will see the council – where no single party has overall control – cut tax by just over 1 per cent. Next door Tory controlled Wandsworth is going further, chopping the tax by one-quarter.

Changes in grant distribution have hit the shire counties hard, especially those in the Midlands and South-east. In the shires, where council tax is levied and collected by the districts, rises will average 11 per cent.

The average increase of 8.5 per cent adds £60 to the tax payable on a band D property, bringing the total payment to £748. But the averages conceal some large cash outlays for householders. Although council tax increased by only 5.5 per cent in the city, Liverpool residents in band D properties will be paying more than £1,100 for the services of a council which, despite efforts to improve, still scores badly on tests of municipal efficiency. The council said most homes were in the lower bands and many householders were on benefits and so paid nothing.

Another council formerly considered far to the left, Hackney in east London, is this year asking its council tax payers for zero extra compared with 1997-98 – and this is despite a 20 plus per cent increase in the amount the borough has to collect on behalf of the Metropolitan Police. Labour Party factions are currently struggling for control in the borough.

The Government was busy yesterday rebutting the charge that it had discriminated against rural areas. Local government minister Nick Raynsford asserted that the distribution of grants was fair; they were working within a budget bequeathed by the Tories.

He added that the Government was reviewing the basics of local government finance and was tackling unfairnesses such as calculating tourist numbers as if they were local inhabitants – this revision would further hit Tory Westminster, which is suffering a major loss of grant this year. Westminster is increasing its council tax by nearly 7 per cent, although the average payment for Band D properties (£325) will still be well below the London average.

Mr Raynsford said that variations in council tax reflected the vitality of local democratic choice. "If we wanted a standard council tax everywhere we wouldn't have local government, just administration of central government services," he added.

The Tories, true to form, claimed that Conservative councils were more careful with taxpayers' money. The Tory environment spokesman, Sir Norman Fowler, said that the average Conservative council tax in 1998-9 would be £615 for occupants of band D properties, while the Labour average in 1997-98 was already more than £740.

How the increases could affect you

Newbury	20%	Westminster	6.9%
Devon	19.4%	Manchester	5.7%
Hillingdon	12.2%	Islington	3.7%
Wakefield	11.8%	Wigan	0%
Camden	9.9%	Lambeth	–1.2%
Newcastle	9.1%	Wandsworth	–24.5%

Ex-councillors 'out to get Prescott'

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

EX-LABOUR councillors motivated by "personal disappointment" were last night blamed by party officials for the "vendetta" against John Prescott, undermining the Deputy Prime Minister in his Hull constituency.

Mr Prescott was given the backing of local party officials, after going public about a campaign which has subjected him and his family to months of anguish.

Mr Prescott had not named those he believed were involved in a "shadowy campaign" against him. But Andrew Sharp, regional secretary of the party in North Yorkshire, which covers Hull, said: "I must make it clear that many of the allegations that have been made by councillors and former councillors seem to be based on little more than personal disappointment at not being selected as a candidate in council elections."

He said the police were investigating other reports which included break-ins, malicious telephone calls, and evidence that two journalists had been raking through Mr Prescott's refuse bins at his home in Hull for information.

Mr Sharp rejected allegations by one of the three deselected Hull Labour councillors, Terry Garaghty, that claims of corruption had not been investigated properly by the party. Mr Geraghty said: "It's just a smokescreen to cover up what has been happening in the city. I don't think there's a vendetta. I've never heard of a vendetta.

"Quite honestly, when politicians stoop to this sort of accusation they are either trying to cover up or they're not living in the real world."

Mr Geraghty was one of the three Labour councillors who were suspended by the party last year and had appeals rejected. They have been barred from standing for the party for the May elections.

The Independent disclosed on Monday that Mr Prescott believed he was the target for a smear campaign, which included a raid on his refuse bins at his family house in Hull

Mr Prescott yesterday said his family was paying "an unacceptable price" for the vendetta being waged against him.

Direct action: A policewoman buying a T-shirt from a member of a disabled pressure group in Westminster yesterday, when about 1,200 people, hundreds of them in wheelchairs, lobbied Parliament to voice their anger and fears over benefit cuts Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Bug-buster appointed to head millennium task force

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A WOMAN engineer was yesterday appointed Britain's official millennium bug-buster.

Gwynneth Flower is to be full-time director of Action 2000, the government-sponsored organisation which has the task of mobilising business to face up to the threat of the year 2000 computer crisis.

Because thousands of computers, and millions of computer programmes, work on two-digit years, the year 2000 will be represented by 00 – and many machines will falsely read that as 1900, with unknown consequences. Some machines are certain to "crash", and there could be unpredictable chain-reactions with linked systems.

Ms Flower told *The Independent* last night: "Our priority is to stop the cataclysmic happening, but inconvenience is something we will all have to live with, when it happens.

"There will be a lot of problems to sort out, even if we avert major crisis. The basic structure of life will continue, even though a lot of the niceties may have gone. If your car breaks down, the central heating stops, the fax doesn't work, that's not catastrophic. But if there's no transport, the banks can't release money, food doesn't get to the shops, and you can't fly around the place, then we have got problems ...

"If we raise too much of an Armageddon scenario, people shut off their minds and become fatalistic and say there is nothing they can do. We have to strike a balance between complacency on the one hand, and panic on the other. We have got to raise anxiety."

Ms Flower was until recently head of the Central London Training and Enterprise Council. Aged 59, she has worked for BP as manager of communications development, as a director of Plessey Electronic Systems, and as director of sales and marketing with GEC Marconi.

Thousands still suffering at hands of 'appalling' CSA

By Colin Brown

THOUSANDS of people will suffer over "unacceptable" errors by the Child Support Agency, a high-powered committee of MPs protested yesterday in the most hard-hitting criticism so far of its record.

The hardship and distress caused by the CSA was sometimes linked to suicide, said the MPs in a biting report on the agency.

The spending watchdog, the Commons select committee on public accounts, calls for a one-off injection of money into the CSA to clear the backlog of more than 500,000 cases.

The agency, which has a statutory duty to pursue absent parents for maintenance payments, "appalled" MPs on the committee with a litany of failures, including a backlog of 572,000 cases, and outstanding debt by parents totalling £1.1bn.

But the MPs' sharpest criticism was over the CSA's record of errors, which are hurting families either because the demands are too high or the payments are too low.

The chairman of the committee, Tory MP David Davis, condemned the agency for "failing the children and families it was designed to protect". He said: "It is frankly appalling that errors in assessments are left unchecked and the process for new assessments is riddled with confusion and delay."

The CSA told the MPs that 39 per cent of payments were wrong, and its chief executive, Faith Boardman, who was brought in to sort out the mess after the agency's launch, said it did not have the resources to put all the errors right.

The committee said: "We think it is important that Parliament and the public should know that the agency have taken the decision to let hundreds of thousands of incorrect assessments hang fire until individual cases rise to the surface of attention or come up for periodic review. Thus many thousands of people will suffer hardship and distress at a difficult time in their lives and the agency expect them to accept this unless and until their cases come up for review. This is unacceptable. Individual citizens should not suffer because of the mistakes of public bodies."

Many MPs have been pressing the Government to scrap the CSA and start again, as the only solution to the backlog of cases, but ministers so far have insisted that reform is the best answer. The committee's report will intensify the demands for more radical action.

Hereditary peers' rights to be axed

MINISTERIAL sources indicated the Government will go ahead with a constitutional reform bill in the Autumn to end the right of hereditary peers to vote and speak in the Lords.

The Cabinet yesterday agreed the broad outline of the Queen's Speech for the next session **writes Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent.**

The strong signal that Tony Blair plans to move ahead with stage one of the reform of the House of Lords before reaching a deal over the second stage for a possible elected upper chamber came as moves were made by the Government to get the Tories back "on board".

Lord Cranborne, the Tory leader in the Lords, yesterday disclosed he was called in to renewed talks with the Government leader in the Lords, Lord Richard. It is a move which will be seen as evidence that the Government fears its attempts to reform the Lords could be blocked by Tory hereditary peers.

Lord Richard said: "I am pleased that the Opposition are back on board. It is important that we explore vigorously the possibility of getting a consensus, and these are steps towards doing that."

Lord Cranborne is also demanding that the Government produces its two-stage plan for reform, before proceeding with legislation to remove the voting powers of hereditary peers.

In a separate move, the Government is to give the Scottish Parliament and its executive a say over the distribution of money for good causes from the National Lottery in Scotland.

Treasury not green enough, say MPs

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

WHEN it comes to caring about the environment and eco-friendly economic growth, Her Majesty's Treasury is all talk and next to no action, MPs from all parties declared yesterday.

A powerful new Commons committee produced a scathing report on the green credentials of Chancellor Gordon Brown's all-important department.

It also suggests that every household should have a VAT-free fuel allowance for basic heating and lighting. That would help the poor, but to stop richer people wasting energy, there would be a higher tax rate on electricity and gas above this annual allowance.

Tory MP John Horam, chairman of the environmental audit committee, said: "There's no reality to the Treasury's rhetoric. There's no evidence, either in the pre-budget report, or in what they said to this committee, that they have a strategy for sustainable development." The committee's Labour MPs were equally unimpressed. "You can't just play lip service to the environment," said Helen Brinton, the Labour MP for Peterborough.

The committee's first task after being created late last year was to examine Mr Brown's November pre-Budget consultation report. Its MPs wanted to know how the Chancellor would fulfil his aim of raising taxes on pollution and other environmentally harmful activities – "bads" – while cutting taxation on "goods", such as employment.

Unlike ordinary Commons select committees, which scrutinise particular departments, this one can summon ministers and officials from any department. This is because its job is to consider how actions and policies across the whole of government are impacting on the environment over a time scale of decades.

But its first inquiry got off to a bad start when Dawn Primarolo, Treasury minister, turned down its request to give evidence, pleading the pre-Budget convention of silence.

It was only after pressure from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions that she agreed to appear, and when she did she gave very little away.

In its first report, the committee complains that it could find no underlying Treasury strategy for judging how its own policies, taxation changes and overall economic growth helped or harmed the environment. Yet no other arm of government had more impact on natural resources, waste and pollution.

At a press conference yesterday, Cynog Dafis, a Plaid Cymru MP and committee member, said: "Green taxes are not just an opportunity here and there to raise a bit of cash." He envisioned them being used to shift the economy into consuming less land, fossil fuels, water, minerals and other natural resources.

With just 10 short paragraphs devoted to the environment, the pre-budget report was a big disappointment to the MPs. They call on Mr Brown to set up a green tax commission to advise him on eco-taxation – something Ms Primarolo appeared to rule out. The committee recommends that with each passing year the Treasury should get a larger proportion of its revenues from taxing pollution and waste, and give regular reports on its progress.

The committee says the anomaly in which VAT is charged on homes being renovated or converted, but not on newly built property, must end. This would encourage urban regeneration and discourage greenfield development.

Diana's death boosts money for charities

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE death of Diana, Princess of Wales, sparked an massive increase in the amount of money given to charity, it emerged yesterday.

As trustees of the memorial fund moved to quell criticism of the way the first round of grants have been distributed, some charities said that her death had raised awareness of the importance of donating money.

Vicki Pulman, of the Charities Aid Foundation, said that although a few organisations had lost out as millions of pounds flooded into the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, many others had benefited.

"In the months after her death there was a massive increase in the amount of money given to charity," she said.

"It stimulated a lot of people who had not previously donated money and it was given to all kinds of charities."

Many organisations who were never associated with the Princess said they had benefited after her death.

Save the Children, whose patron is the Princess Royal, said they had received a large number of donations in memory of Diana.

Joanne Bailey, a spokeswoman for the organisation, said: "There was a new kind of understanding of why it was important to give to charity and we were very gratified by that."

Olive Gearing, of Oxfam, said that in the months after Diana's death, many people had made spontaneous donations in her name.

"Our shop staff reported that a lot of money was given to us in recognition of the fact that we do the type of work that she supported," she said.

The trustees of the memorial fund said yesterday that it would become a vital source of charitable donations. They have been criticised for allocating £8m to eight causes while 95 other charities will share £5m.

But Vivienne Parry, one of the trustees, said: "There will be so many grant announcements that in the end people will take no notice, even though some of them will be for large sums of money," she said.

"The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund will become part and parcel of everyday life in Britain."

Most of the charities who will receive a share of the £5m, including Barnados and Help The Aged, said yesterday that it was an unexpected bonus.

Joanne Amies-Winter with her husband Stephen. She was found dead after taking an overdose of cocaine

Body-builder killed by cocaine overdose

BRITAIN'S strongest woman died after taking a overdose of cocaine, an inquest heard yesterday.

Joanne Amies-Winter, 23, was found dead by her husband Stephen, on 23 February on the living-room floor at a house in Newbury, Berkshire, where the couple had been staying with friends.

The West Berkshire Coroner, Charles Hoile, who recorded a verdict of accidental death at Newbury Coroner's Court, said: "The message is quite clear – hard drugs can and do kill."

The hearing was told that scientific tests had revealed that Mrs Amies-Winter had taken as much as two grams of cocaine – a fatal dose – in the hours before her death.

A post-mortem examination showed that the champion body-builder was a regular drug-taker. As well as the cocaine, a small trace of Prozac and larger quantities of ephedrine, a stimulant, and Nubain, an analgesic, were also found in her body.

Born in Hereford, where she still lived, Mrs Amies-Winter became a triathlete at the age of 14 and went on to represent Britain in the European and world championships.

She also achieved acclaim as a body-builder in national and international competitions and was Britain's strongest woman.

Mr Amies-Winter, also a top European strongman, told the hearing that he had once seen his wife injecting cocaine.

He said: "Jo liked to try all manner of things and she could not really be advised not to until she had done it herself. That was one of her problems."

Mr Amies-Winter told the hearing that Mrs Amies-Winter, a residential care worker, had recently been taken to hospital suffering severe pain. She had also suffered from pleurisy and bronchitis.

Albanians get ready for a war they dread

By Andrew Gumbel
in Pristina

THIS IS the moment the Albanians of Kosovo have been dreading. For years they have been told that war with the Serbs was just around the corner, and that they were going to be the next Croatia or Bosnia. Now, zero hour has arrived.

For the past week, as Serb paramilitary police forces have blasted their way into Albanian villages and killed dozens of men, women and children on the pretext of flushing out terrorists, the telephones to Kosovo's capital Pristina and other towns in the province have been jammed with calls from relatives abroad, not just expressing concern but offering money and, if necessary, fighting men.

Most of these conversations take place late at night, because the phone lines are too poor during the day. Nobody, it seems, minds being called at 3am – many are too anxious to sleep properly and are sitting up with relatives and friends drinking raki and trying to imagine what their lives will be like if they are caught up in a full-scale conflict.

"Several friends have called in the past few days saying, 'I'm ready. My bag is packed and sitting in the hallway. I'll just wait for you to give me the signal and I'll be on my way to fight for Kosovo'," said a 20-year-old sociology student who preferred not to be identified.

After the first killings, in the village of Likoshane, families all over Kosovo rushed to buy up staple foods, detergents, medical supplies and fuel. The panic-buying did not last long, but it generated endless conversations about the practicalities of war.

"I came home and saw this huge pile of soap, antiseptic cream, disinfectant and aspirin and I thought, 'Didn't anyone think of buying some anti-depressants?'," the student said. "My father got mad at my mother because she had bought packets and packets of macaroni and he said, 'How on earth are we going to cook macaroni if there is no electricity to boil the water?' We figured out the best method would be to soak the macaroni in cold water overnight and then we could eat it for breakfast."

Kosovo has been on a slow-burning fuse since at least as far back as 1987, when the current President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, galvanised Serb nationalism by hailing the province as the cradle of the Serb nation and vowed to "give it back" to the Serbs who lived there in a minority of less than 10 per cent. Two years later, with Mr Milosevic installed as Serbian President, Kosovo lost its autonomy and the local Albanian leaders were replaced by Serbs in charge of a large, repressive police force.

"All my life I have been brought up to expect a war," the sociology student said. "We thought we would be the first ones, and we were really surprised when the fighting started in Croatia and Bosnia instead. People would go around talking in very specific terms: 'The war will start in September', or 'The war will start in six weeks'."

Some years ago, Serbs and Albanians went to school together and had little trouble forming friendships. But after more than seven years in which the Albanians have boycotted the Serbian state and set up their own parallel institutions, the word "Serb" has become synonymous with "enemy". Nearly all adult Albanians can speak Serbian, but a new generation of Kosovo Albanian children who have never attended state school is now growing up resolutely monolingual. Since few Serbian families speak any Albanian, the two sides are literally losing the ability to speak to each other.

Young Albanians are forever under the watchful eye of the Serb thugs who lurk on street corners. Demonstrations are broken up with force, and if the participants are not beaten with police batons they are often attacked on their way home. And yet, few outside the combat zone, in the rural Drenica region, west of Pristina, are taking the opportunity to flee abroad before a conflict erupts; if anything, the tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians living in Western Europe and beyond are considering coming home to their families in their hour of need.

"I spent three years in London and maybe it was a mistake to come back," said Bajram, 29, a musician and medical student. "But if I left again, who would look after my father and the rest of my family? Our family is our life."

By unfortunate coincidence, the sociology student had just received a visa to Paris when the fighting started. "My mother urged me to go and stay out of Kosovo. But how am I supposed to go to Paris when this is happening?"

Life in conflict: An Albanian man queuing to identify the bodies of relatives yesterday in Srbica, 25 miles west of Pristina. Photograph: Srdjan Ilic/AP

Grieving relatives refuse to allow the truth to be buried

SRBICA (AP) – The Kosovo Albanians filed past 49 bodies, some charred or badly burned, trying to identify relatives who perished in last week's police crackdown in southern Yugoslavia's restive province.

At least three corpses were of young children; more than a dozen were women. Some were missing limbs, apparently lost in explosions. A few were charred beyond recognition. The Serbian police still kept watch. A troop carrier was parked 50 yards away, its gun pointed at the crowd of 50 mourners, mostly men. Police blocked main roads all around, forcing mourners to come on mountain paths, by foot or tractor, to the deserted town of Srbica, 25 miles west of Pristina, Kosovo's capital.

The ethnic Albanians refused to collect the bodies, insisting on autopsy by internationally appointed experts. They say the Serbs want to cover up atrocities by swiftly burying the dead.

The Serb sources deny it, saying the bodies are decomposing. On Tuesday, Serbian police threatened to bury the dead in a mass grave if the corpses are not collected. But it was not clear if they would carry out that threat.

In Pristina, Robert Gelbard, the American envoy to the Balkans, arrived on the elusive quest for a diplomatic solution to the latest Balkan violence. Mr Gelbard met the leader of the main ethnic Albanian party, Ibrahim Rugova, who advocates a peaceful struggle for Kosovo's independence from Serbia. Mr Gelbard on Monday met Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, who in a statement from his office insisted that Kosovo's problems could be solved only in Serbia.

Adem Demaci, a Kosovo Albanian leader who spent decades in Serbian jails, said the outside world's reaction to the events in Kosovo was too weak to force Mr Milosevic into changing his stance. "Milosevic has declared war to Albanians," Mr Demaci said. "Albanian resistance will not cease."

Serbs have brushed aside foreign criticism, saying they were cracking down on a shadowy separatist armed force called the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Israelis kill 3 in West Bank

Israeli soldiers fired on an Arab-owned van at a West Bank roadblock, killing three Palestinian passengers and wounding four. An Israeli soldier was injured after what the army said was an attempt by the van to ram the roadblock. Palestinians said it veered off the road because of mechanical problems. Protests erupted in Hebron, where youths stoned Israeli soldiers. *— AP, Tarkoumiah*

Close call

India's President KR Narayanan took the first step towards appointing a prime minister when he met Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the Hindu Nationalist BJP. Recalling Mr Vajpayee's earlier stint in 1996, when he was brought down after 13 days, Mr Narayanan asked him to persuade him he will be able to form a stable government. If the Telugu Desam Party, which won 12 seats, abstains from taking sides in a confidence vote, Mr Vajpayee will survive with a majority of one.
— Peter Popham, New Delhi

Selling seal

Canada's seal hunters are launching a slick marketing campaign touting such products as seal pepperoni and cure-almost-anything seal-oil pills. It's a new tactic for the sealers, who face a high-decibel trans-Atlantic protest campaign as the seal-hunting season moves into full swing over the next few weeks. Samples of seal sausage and seal pepperoni are being offered at food fairs across Canada.
— AP, St John's, Newfoundland

Sex-case first

In reportedly the first workplace sexual harassment conviction in Greece, a court gave Dimitris Asimakopoulos, a supermarket boss, a suspended 10-month prison term for fondling a 23-year-old female employee. She was fired one week after beginning legal proceedings.

Voters' Europhobia threatens to topple Denmark's leader

By Imre Karacs

The economy is booming, unemployment has been nearly halved in the past five years, yet voters feeling insecure about their future in Europe are threatening to turf their wooden Prime Minister out of office.

Sounds familiar? Polls ahead of today's election in Denmark say Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen is heading for defeat. If he is ousted after a campaign in which the country's semi-detached status in the EU was an important issue, the cause of European integration may suffer a blow.

Mr Rasmussen persuaded Danes in 1993 to approve a watered-down version of the Maastricht Treaty, following the débâcle of the first referendum. Now opt-outs won by Denmark, including the right to shun monetary union, are being undermined by his opponent. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, leader of the Liberal Party and the choice of a putative right-of-centre coalition, wants to opt back in. The polls predict a victory for his alliance.

Eurocrats should not rejoice yet, as the decision over the country's place in Europe rests with the electorate, who will return to the ballot box in two months to ratify Maastricht II: the Amsterdam Treaty. Instead of bringing Copenhagen closer to Brussels, as Mr Ellemann-Jensen hopes, May's referendum could wreak havoc in Europe once again. The Treaty must be ratified by all 15 member-states. Without a Danish "yes", it is back to the drawing board.

Rasmussen: Successful, but looks set to be ousted

The irony of the situation is that there was no need to make Europe an issue in the election. Voters found Mr Rasmussen's mild Euro-scepticism reassuring, and were almost certain to sign for the new treaty. But in the event of his demise, fears about a European super-state may provoke a stampede into the rejectionist camp.

China's leaders put one of their own on trial for corruption

By Teresa Poole
in Peking

THE top echelon of the Chinese Communist Party has finally decided to put one of its own in the dock for corruption. The long-awaited trial of Chen Xitong, the disgraced former Peking party chief and Politburo member, will take place soon, it was announced yesterday.

The Supreme Court Procurator, General Zhang Siqing, yesterday told the National People's Congress (NPC) that Mr Chen, 67, would be charged with embezzlement and dereliction of duty.

Mr Chen was sacked as Peking party secretary in April 1995 after Wang Baosen, a vice-mayor of Peking, shot himself rather than face corruption charges.

Subsequent reports said that 18.3 billion yuan (£1.3 billion) had been embezzled from Peking's funds during Mr Chen's tenure, implicating a ring of corrupt officials.

Mr Wang and Mr Chen were said to have had a string of villas and apartments for their relatives and mistresses. Mr Chen disappeared from view after April 1995, but was not thrown out of the party until last autumn.

His is a test case for whether the highest ranking officials must also clean up their act. During recent anti-crime crackdowns, lesser mortals were swiftly executed for financial crimes such as VAT receipt fraud. Mr Chen's son has already been sentenced to 12 years in jail for corruption.

Sadly, the trial is certain to be held behind closed doors, with only a sanitised version appearing in the official media.

Although his crimes are well above the necessary threshold, Chen is very unlikely to receive the death sentence. Any jail term would probably be served under house arrest.

Corruption is a way of life in China. Mr Zhang said Chinese prosecutors investigated 387,352 cases of corruption, bribery, embezzlement and dereliction of duty between 1993 and 1997. The cases prevented direct economic losses of 22.92 billion yuan (£1.7 billion), but only represent the tip of the iceberg.

Meanwhile, the deputies to the NPC yesterday gave overwhelming support to a plan to halve the number of central government civil servants, with 2,814 delegates voting for the measure, 12 against, and 33 abstaining.

Fugitive's brother cuts off hand in protest

By David Usborne
in New York

A MONTH-LONG manhunt in the mountains of western North Carolina for the suspect in the bombing of an Alabama abortion clinic has provoked an unusual protest from the fugitive's brother. He has sawn off one of his hands.

The FBI confirmed yesterday that Daniel Rudolph maimed himself at his home in Charleston on Monday. He videotaped himself amputating the hand with an electric circular saw and then sent the tape to the FBI.

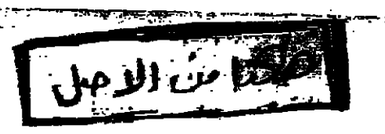
The grisly act was being seen as an appeal to the FBI to end its search for the brother, Eric Rudolph, believed to be hiding deep in the mountains. A $100,000 reward is on offer for information leading to his arrest.

Police have been hunting for Rudolph since charging him with the 29 January attack in Birmingham, Alabama. One off-duty policeman was killed and a nurse was seriously injured in the blast at Birmingham's New Woman All Women Clinic. The device used in the attack was a home-made nail bomb hidden in a plant pot. The FBI has also been searching for evidence linking Rudolph, 31, to the Centennial Park explosion at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

An FBI spokesman in Charleston expressed regret over the self-mutilation. Surgeons in Atlanta were struggling yesterday to re-attach Mr Rudolph's hand. Neighbours in Charleston described medical emergency personnel arriving at his home and searching on the ground for the missing limb.

FBI officials voiced hope that the fugitive would be captured by Friday at the latest.

In the meantime, the manhunt was extended into the popular Smokey Mountain National Park.



Nation rejoices as Sierra Leone leader returns

Ed O'Loughlin in Freetown witnesses a triumphant homecoming

THE PRESIDENT of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, ended nine months of exile yesterday when he returned to Freetown to a hero's welcome.

Several West African heads of state, including Nigeria's dictator Sani Abacha, flew to Sierra Leone to celebrate the reinstallation of Mr Kabbah who was elected president in 1996 but fled to Guinea last May following a coup by junior military officers.

Tens of thousands of people lined the roads from Hastings airport to the National Stadium to cheer the presidential motorcade as it passed. Many had been celebrating at street parties late into the previous night, as police and Nigerian peacekeepers for once turned a blind eye to the midnight curfew.

As the procession passed, the crowds chanted in support of democracy and in praise of the Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping force, Ecomog, which drove Major Johnny Paul Koroma's junta from Freetown last month.

President Kabbah: 'People have suffered for too long'

Condemned by the international community and isolated by sanctions, Koroma's army and its allies in the Revolutionary United Front guerrilla movement had devastated the country in a campaign of looting, rape, arson and murder.

"We are very happy to see him [Kabbah] back," said Mohammed Kargbo, the chairman of the student group. "All along we have been working under cover for democracy. This is not a day for politics but for all the people of Sierra Leone. At last we are free of these bandits."

"The people of Sierra Leone have suffered for too long," Mr Kabbah told the tens of thousands packed into the National Stadium. He promised to do everything in his power to reconstruct the country's infrastructure and economy.

General Abacha, who is expected to resign from the army to offer himself as a civilian candidate in presidential elections later this year, attended the ceremony in civilian clothes. He was cheered wildly by the crowd both as chairman of the Economic Community of West African States and as the man who ordered Nigeria's troops to drive Koroma from power. Few ordinary Sierra Leoneans seem worried about the irony of being saved from military rule by a military ruler.

Having reinstalled himself in State House, Mr Kabbah now faces the task of rebuilding a country shattered by nine months under Koroma's Armed Forces Ruling Council, seven years of civil war and decades of misrule and corruption. The army, which joined the RUF in effectively making war on its own people, no longer exists while the police force, already notorious for corruption, has been further tainted by the failure of most of its members to resist the coup.

The economy, previously dependent on the export of aluminium, titanium dioxide (rutile) and diamonds, has been crippled by the war and many displaced peasants have been unable to plant crops. One of the world's poorest countries, Sierra Leone has the world's lowest average life expectancy at 42 years.

According to one of Mr Kabbah's close aides, Julius Spencer, the government will have to rely on foreign aid until the economy begins to generate income again. He believed the president would seize the opportunity to introduce radical changes.

"I know the structure of government is going to be reformed drastically," he said. "His attitude to corruption is going to be more aggressive." One of the first and most crucial tasks facing the president is to decide how to deal with junta members and collaborators. It is likely that the major figures will be tried for treason, which carries the death penalty.

Rocking the world: The Rolling Stones Keith Richards, Mick Jagger, Ronnie Wood and Charlie Watts in Tokyo, where today they will kick off the Japanese leg of their highly-praised 'Bridges to Babylon' tour
Photograph: Sayuri Inoue/Reuters

Nigerians outshine the British brass

TIME was when the visit of a British High Commissioner to a town in Sierra Leone was a major occasion, but this weekend in Makeni, Peter Penfold was upstaged by the top brass from West Africa's new dominant power, **writes Ed O'Loughlin.**

Having flown into Makeni with a humanitarian assessment team, Mr Penfold found his trip coincided with a visit by the Nigerian military commanders who, under the banner of the Ecomog West African peace-keeping force, had just liberated most of northern Sierra Leone from Major Johhny Paul Koroma's junta.

Quietly waiting at the town's main crossroads, the British team saw the Nigerian officers arrive to the cheers of an enthusiastic crowd, who surged forward to greet Ecomog commander Major General Timothy Shelpidi.

Clutching their swagger canes and shooting sticks, the Nigerians seemed for a moment to be parodying the colonial-era British officers from whose African regiments their own army had grown. But when General Shelpidi told the crowd about the deposed president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's scheduled return to Freetown today, he spoke Krio, the local creole, and the crowd loved it.

Pushed to the front by the Nigerians, Her Majesty's representative in Freetown was rewarded with a polite but brief cheer. But by the time the local paramount chief, Baisebore Kasangna II, invited him to speak, the Nigerians had already left. It may not have been a deliberate snub, but it made clear that Britain is no longer the major foreign power in Sierra Leone.

This despite the fact that the British had come to Makeni bearing gifts. The High Commission and Ministry of Defence have spent the past week busying themselves about an array of humanitarian missions.

Suharto safe as Indonesia edges towards collapse

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Jakarta

EXACTLY 32 years ago this morning, Indonesia – like the Indonesia of 1998 – was in an alarming state. Like today, the economy was in turmoil and prices were rising. In Jakarta, the police and soldiers were on the streets, and thousands of students were demonstrating against the government.

After meeting his cabinet on 11 March 1966, the then President Sukarno could resist no longer: following veiled threats of a military coup, he handed over leadership to a young Javanese general named Suharto.

Thirty-two years later, Indonesia's generals, businessmen and civil servants have met to consider the future of their leadership once again. Their economy is close to collapse, and in Jakarta yesterday at least 10 people were arrested in one of dozens of protests held in cities throughout the country. But there is one big difference from the events of 30 years ago. Today, 11 March 1998, after his unanimous re-election yesterday by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Suharto will be sworn in for his seventh consecutive term as President of Indonesia.

It is a measure of his skill that, even with his economy collapsing, Suharto is still the only credible candidate for the leadership of the world's fourth biggest nation.

Part of the explanation is obvious. The MPR is a parody of a democratic body. Six hundred of its 1,000 members are appointed directly by the government, and 400 are members of a parliament, chosen in rigged elections. Ten are members of the President's family. Suharto was the only candidate, and the MPR held no vote and no debate. At 10am yesterday, the assembly resounded with shouts of "I agree, I agree!". Thus was the matter settled for another five years.

"Suharto is the government, and he is as firmly in control now as he has ever been," a Western diplomat in Jakarta said. "Within the government he is all powerful – the machine operates at his command." When President Suharto disappeared from public view for a fortnight in December, according to

No change: 'Suharto is the government'

diplomats, the government ceased to function.

"Insulting the president" is a serious crime, and the enforcement of this and other laws against "subversion" have prevented the development of any institutions from which alternatives to Suharto might emerge.

The media is under strong pressure to conform. The current affairs magazine *D&R* is being investigated by the police for defaming the President. Its crime was to put on its cover an image of Suharto as the King of Spades. When an executive of *D&R* was asked why it had done this, he said: "No matter how many times we turn the cards, President Suharto will still be elected." The editor could face several years in prison.

The courts are seen as colluding with the government. And Islam, Indonesia's majority religion, is divided between several organisations which President Suharto has played off against one another. Even the two legal opposition parties are virtually run by the government. When Megawati Sukarnoputri, the only other person in the country with a personal following to match Suharto's, became too popular for the President's liking, she was thrown out of the leadership of the Indonesian Democratic Party at the government's behest.

Only the armed forces have the strength to offer a potential challenge. But Suharto's control over the appointments of senior officers is absolute.

At 76, Suharto has already had heart surgery and several unexplained periods of illness. There is the spectre of civil unrest, and the question of whether the army and police can stop sporadic riots over food prices from coalescing with the political protests organised by students and intellectuals. The army may be more divided than it appears. But in the absence of a popular uprising or a military coup, Suharto may see out his next five-year term, in spite of the growing poverty and instability of Indonesia.

"At the moment the riots and protests are isolated," one foreign observer in Jakarta said. "As for the military, why would they want to take over this mess?"

General disappointment: The former dictator Augusto Pinochet weeping yesterday in Santiago as he formally handed over control of Chile's army to General Ricardo Izurieta Photograph: Reuters

Chile's old dictator weeps on leaving the army

SANTIAGO (AP) — General Augusto Pinochet stepped down yesterday as commander of Chile's army with tears in his eyes, ending a 65-year military career that turned him into one of Latin America's longest-lasting dictators.

"Fatherland of mine, I've been your soldier and that makes me happy," Pinochet said, his voice breaking with emotion during his farewell speech. He made no reference to the controversial post he was expected to take as senator for life.

The ceremony, in which General Ricardo Izurieta replaces Pinochet, began with some tension after President Eduardo Frei was booed by relatives of military men in the crowd. Some chanted "Pinochet, Pinochet".

Pinochet, 82, was honoured by a parade at the Military Academy by 3,000 soldiers and 2,000 guests led by President Frei.

Although General Pinochet delivered a mostly military speech, he did refer to the bloody coup of 1973 in which he toppled President Salvador Allende. The military had been forced to act because the nation "was in the brink of self destruction," he said. But, he added, "I do not want to look back, because that anchors the country in the past".

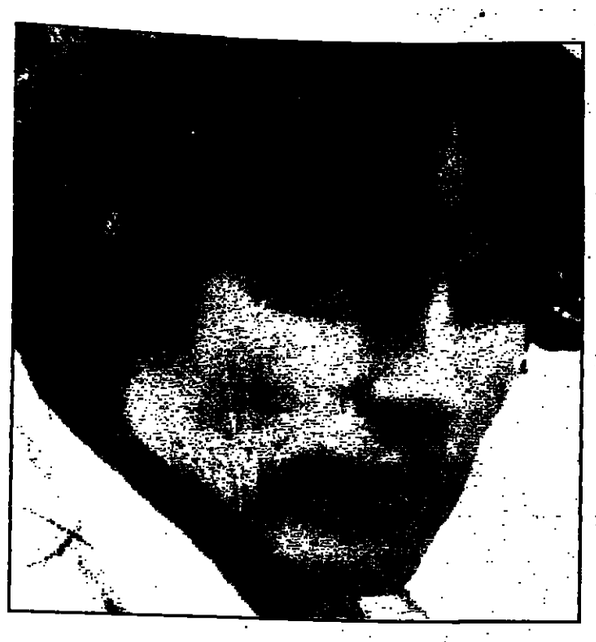
When General Pinochet went to the presidential palace on Monday night for a formal farewell, police had to use water cannon to scatter a small group of demonstrators protesting at his senate plans.

The clash reflected the growing opposition to Pinochet assuming a senate seat, a position he receives as former president under the constitution he himself wrote. His constitution also made him commander of the military after he stepped down from the presidency in 1990.

Protests were expected to continue today, when General Pinochet is sworn in to Congress. Pinochet's critics say a man who shut down Congress and persecuted lawmakers has no place in the legislature.

Gen Pinochet's regime was accused of massive human-rights abuses, including more than 3,000 political killings, according to official figures. Some lawmakers planned to begin impeachment proceedings against Pinochet. But their effort appears doomed as the right-wing opposition, which holds a majority in the Senate, has made clear it will oppose it.

The Bruce Lee of drama



Left, the French playwright Bernard-Marie Koltès. Right, Zubin Varla and Diana Kent in the RSC production of his 'language machine' play, 'Roberto Zucco' Main photograph: Neil Libbert

Words were like weapons in the hands of Bernard-Marie Koltès. No wonder, says **Jeffrey Wainwright**, the French dramatist's latest translator, it's taken almost 10 years since his death from Aids for his work to be grappled in English

THE STREET is not particularly mean but this figure you've noticed ahead doesn't look like somebody you'd want to meet. You quicken, or slow, or veer, as imperceptibly as possible, to ensure your lines don't intersect. In this geometry is a tangle of anxieties: you will be asked for money, robbed, assaulted, raped, murdered, sold to, preached at, talked to. It happens.

This, the familiar fear of coincidence, is the simple starting-point for the French writer Bernard-Marie Koltès's remarkable play from 1987, *In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields*, which opens at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow next week. Here the two characters do intersect, each claiming that the encounter is willed by the other's desire or design, and whether what occupies the next 90 minutes is, as its first director Patrice Chéreau said, a debate between 18th-century *philosophes* or the entry of the clowns, the sensé of incipient violence squats in the viscera throughout. It is a verbal pavane that could at any moment become a knife fight.

Of course, if you were Bruce Lee – one of Koltès's heroes – the situation would be straightforwardly resolved: you could walk anywhere without breaking stride. Koltès once wrote a study of Lee's film *The Last Dragon*: one section is called "Le kung-fu et les mots", and it is easy to see how he understands words as weapons, and especially how he sees a parallel between the ritual formulations of highly structured rhetorical exchanges and the movements of martial art. It was this highly wrought verbal formality – so apparently incongruous in the garbage-strewn underpass world where the characters Koltès calls simply The Dealer and The Client meet – that first drew me to translate the work.

As Luis Pasqual, former director of the Théâtre d'Europe in Paris, has said, Koltès's language contains "an architecture of the emotions articulated in a musical way". The long speeches which the characters exchange have the combative wit in which nothing is missed, no weakness unprobed, characteristic of Diderot's dialogues *Rameau's Nephew* and *Jacques the Fatalist*. They are intricate syntactical structures, ruthlessly acute in their logical progression, but, with the reiteration of key words and images, mesmerically rhythmical. The piece is a duel cast as a deal, for Koltès's underlying implication is that a commercial transaction, with its potential for exploitation and fear of humiliation, is a contemporary paradigm for human relationships.

AS THE Dealer and the Client fence guardedly around the undefined but eroticised matter of what is being offered and what is wanted, they do touch the usual expectancies of what might bond them – fraternity, mothers, childhood recollection – but none connect. "Try to reach out to me," says the Client, "you won't touch me... There is no love, there is no love." All they seem to have in common is their absorption in the parabolas inscribed by each other's speeches.

Diderot and Bruce Lee: Bernard-Marie Koltès was obviously a writer of eclectic interests. He also translated *The Winter's Tale*, while Hamlet was a figure of recurrent interest for him. Now, nearly 10 years after his death from Aids in 1989, at the age of 41, the English-language theatre is starting to take a sustained interest in a playwright long regarded as a major force on the Continent.

> 'Try to reach out to me,' says the Client, 'you won't touch me ... There is no love, there is no love'

Philip Prowse's Glasgow *Solitude* will next week join Koltès's last play, *Roberto Zucco*, currently part of the RSC's Stratford rep (in an excellent staging by James Macdonald and a deeply thought translation by Martin Crimp), as the second major presentation of his work in this country; and there's more to come: a BBC radio production of *Solitude* next March; *Key West* in Dublin sometime soon. Yet *Zucco* alone had 17 separate productions in Germany in the five years following its 1990 Berlin premiere.

Koltès himself was a restless traveller, spending long periods in West Africa, Latin America and New York. His mobility is reflected in work that constantly migrates from setting to setting and style to style – from the confined unity of *Solitude*, for example, to the action-movie parody that is one aspect of *Zucco*. There's a productive tension, too, between the French metropolitan culture of philosophical debate and characters and actions set on the margins – in the Third World, on the rough edges of Western cities.

What Koltès does not provide, though, is sociological realism. The anti-hero Roberto Zucco escapes from prison and goes on a brief spree of robbery and murder, including that of his mother. But what is so unsettling is that Zucco remains unpredictable and inscrutable. The Old Gentleman looks an inevitable victim but Zucco helps him with a sudden tenderness; later, he shoots a child in cold blood. In the RSC production, Zubin Varla's blank, slightly bemused countenance cannot be read for motive or inner life. We see, says Macdonald, how society demonises and mythologises Zucco, how he plays a role in our seemingly necessary anxiety about criminality, but also how, with our familiar "psychological sub-structure done away with", we don't have the illusory comfort of "understanding" him. The play gives us, says Crimp, "no point of rest".

MARTIN CRIMP calls *Roberto Zucco* "a language machine" – by which he means that the play is "propelled by the use of language which is not afraid to be excessive or lyrical"; Macdonald adds that the characters "invent themselves through language". Their perception certainly applies to *Solitude*, where the characters are only defined by what they say in the real time of the play and the sardonic pleasure they take in its elaboration. Also, importantly, they are defined by what the one says about the other: in what sense, outside of their respective interpretations of each other, is one a "dealer" and the other a "client"? The Paris programme for Chéreau's marvellous 1995 production – his third attempt at the piece – quoted Jean-Luc Godard's question and answer: "Where do you live? In language" and Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist*: "How did they meet? By chance. Where have they come from? From wherever they were last. Where are they going? Who ever knows where he is going?"

This is the metaphysical condition of Koltès's characters, but the moment an actor steps on stage, the character can no longer be abstract. One theatrical fascination of his work is the dizzying openness it presents to actors and director. The characters live in time too: a play must end. How Philip Prowse and his actors choose to realise this condition, and Koltès's enigmatic ending, I can scarcely wait to see.

'In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields', 18 March-11 April, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow (0141-429 0022). 'Roberto Zucco', in rep, RSC The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon (01789 295623).

Trio's timely approach

Emphasising the universality of their plays is a priority for the team behind Suspect Culture, a young Glasgow theatre company. **Brendan Wallace** reports

Suspect Culture: from left, Graham Eatough, David Smith, and David Greig Photograph: Kevin Low

AS THEY prepare to bring *Timeless*, their most ambitious show, to London, Graham Eatough (who directs) and David Greig (who provides most of the text) have reason to feel proud of themselves. In just five years they have transformed Suspect Culture from yet another student theatre group (who originally got together in Bristol) into one of the most innovative companies in Scotland. And with three major productions under their belt – *One Way Street* (after Walter Benjamin), *Airport* and now *Timeless* – they have not only impressed with their work, but have managed to build links with Europe (by means of co-productions and workshops) that are unusual in the world of Scottish theatre.

Not that they're ashamed of their humble student origins. "People tell us that it's great that we've just had our third production," observes Eatough, "but I worked out the other day that it's actually our 12th."

Timeless is by far their biggest project, though. "Just the other day, I worked out how many people we employed," says David Smith, administrative producer and the third member of the Suspect Culture team, "and it was terrifying. I think, if we'd thought about it too much, we'd have been too afraid to do it."

It was only after a slow process of trial and error that Suspect Culture's distinctive approach evolved. Perhaps the most difficult early decision was choosing Glasgow as a base. Says Greig: "At first it was more a negative thing of not moving to London... But once we arrived, it was easier to work out our artistic agenda. We'd always developed things in rehearsal, for example, but when we moved here we realised that that was what we existed to do. And we realised that we wanted to look at the physical side of theatre in a conscious way rather than simply letting the actors do what they wanted. And, thirdly, even though we were to be based in Scotland, we wanted to have a European angle to our work. That meant not just taking European influences into our theatre, but also creating work with the intention that it could and should tour abroad."

Timeless itself is an attempt to create a work with a certain amount of universality. On one level, it's the story of four friends who have become mired in nostalgia for their youth, yet, when reunited, fail to re-create it. But this touches on numerous other themes to do with ageing, memory and sexuality, all related to the problem of how twenty-somethings deal with facing the responsibility of age.

It's a theme that's cropped up in *Friends* and *This Life*, but what sets *Timeless* apart is its non-naturalistic approach and its integration of text with music (in this case, composed for a string quartet by Nick Powell).

"One of the initial ideas was just to use music in a way that we hadn't done before," says Eatough. "Subsequent to that was the notion of trying to tell a simpler story than we had done in the past. Some of our earlier work had been very fragmentary, with actors playing lots of different roles and stuff like that. So, for this one, we made a conscious effort to give each performer one role, so that we could explore their characters in a bit more depth."

The next problem was to work out a chronological structure around which to orient the piece: *Timeless* takes three moments in the lives of the characters, and attempts to relate them back to an (almost) mythical picnic on the beach, which has become a symbol for their lost youth. As such, the "story" sounds mundane, but then, that was very much the point.

"We didn't want to make the characters significantly different from people like ourselves, or people who might be sitting in the audience," says Greig. "We wanted to find a strong level of depth and emotion in ordinary situations, and we were keen to create a level of intensity without having, say, a murder, or some great unusual event."

And, in Scotland at least, it seems to have worked. Eatough says he's been amazed by how much audiences have related to it: "When you've set yourself up as doing something vaguely new or different, questions of accessibility become really important. We don't want to be on the live art fringe, or to be seen as esoteric, so we're really pleased that audiences seem to have this emotional engagement with the work."

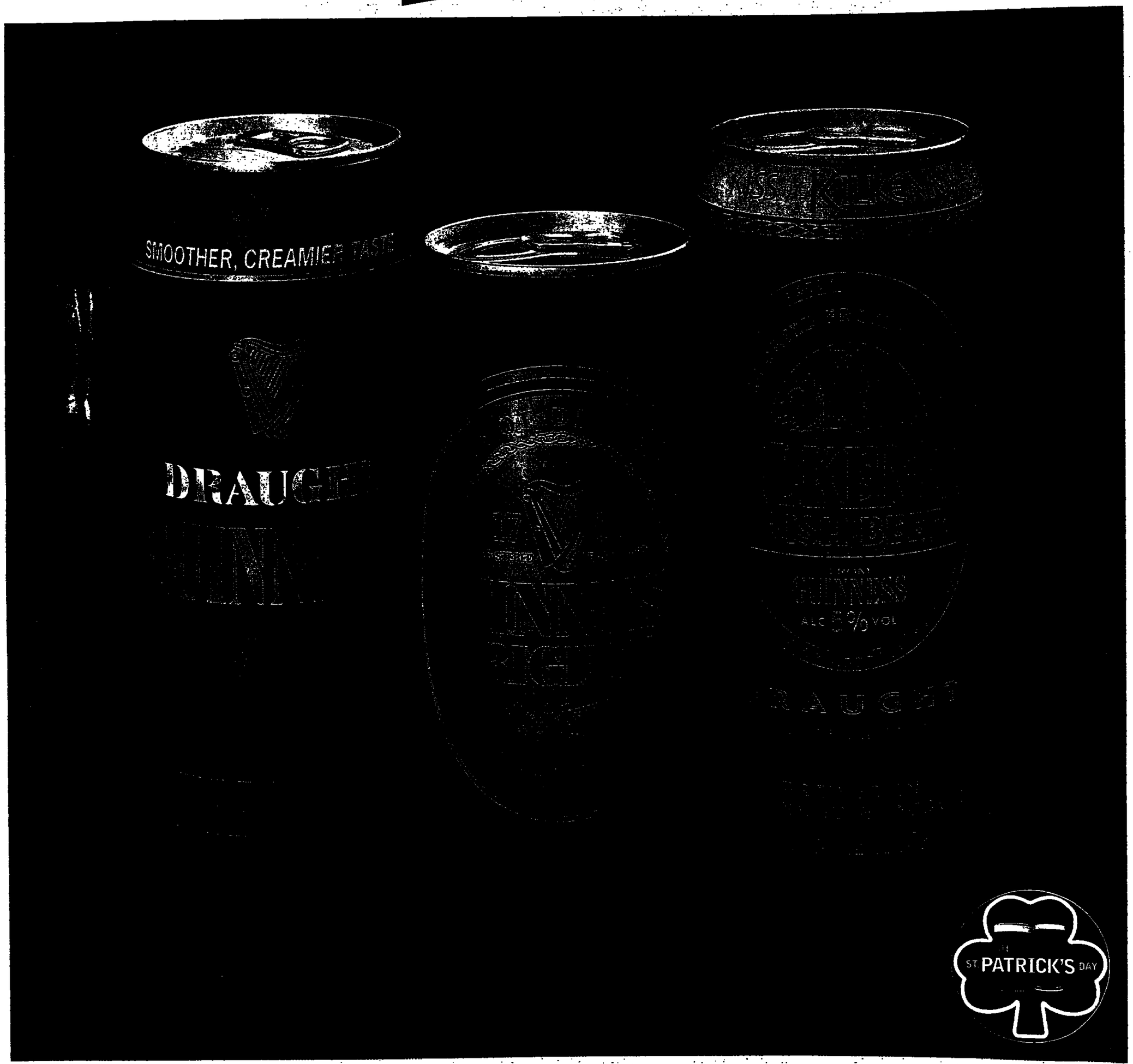
As befits Suspect Culture's European perspective, after its London run *Timeless* goes on tour abroad, and will be followed by collaborations with companies in Milan and the Basque country. But, for now, Greig and Eatough are basking in the rapturous reception the show is receiving, and their arrival as a world-class theatre company.

"We are doing a different kind of theatre from anyone else in Scotland," says Eatough, summing up. "I don't know anyone else with the same artistic objectives. And I don't think your average theatre audience will have seen anything like it."

'Timeless': 17-21 March, Donmar Warehouse, Earlham St, London WC2 (0171-369 1732)

"Save us from temptation."

St. Patrick



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FRESH FOOD, FRESH IDEAS.

Why the Così cast were adrift when they went to Marks

The Royal Opera House may be happy with costumes from M&S, but, says **Melanie Rickey**, Armani offers so much more

THREE female singers from the Royal Opera House went costume hunting in the Marble Arch branch of Marks & Spencer on Monday, after Giorgio Armani refused to alter clothes he had previously designed for a modern-dress production of *Così fan tutte*. Armani was paid £18,000 last summer, and £18,000 in 1995, to provide costumes for revivals of the opera, but was unhappy about making further changes to the outfits, needed because some of the singers were smaller and lighter than their predecessors.

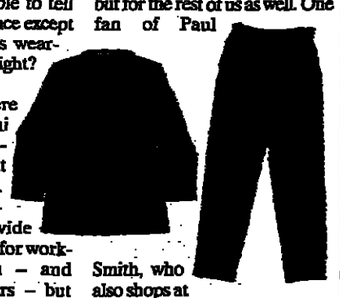
So the Royal Opera House team decided Britain's favourite quality clothes shop could provide clothes just as good, at a fraction of the price – £120 per suit, to be precise. And, what's more, they liked what they saw. After all, no one would be able to tell the difference except the singers wearing them, right?

Wrong.

This is where the Armani vs M&S debate falls flat on its face. Both companies provide simple suits for working women – and opera singers – but there the similarities end. The essential difference between high fashion and M&S is not just the designer but the quality and weight of the fabric used, the amount of time spent on manufacture, and the detailing, such as choice of buttons. And when you're under the stage lights, the cut and drape of top-quality clothing will be particularly apparent.

While M&S goes a long way towards offering the best for their customers, spending a little bit more will make all the difference; not just for opera fans, but for the rest of us as well. One fan of Paul Smith, who also shops at M&S, explains it thus: "I tried on a £299 suit at M&S last week, which looked good, but didn't fit in all the right places. For £186 more I bought a Paul Smith suit that did fit, and will, I'm sure, last many years."

Perhaps all this palaver will teach the Royal Opera House a lesson: don't spend £18,000 on clothes that will only be *worn once*. M&S is far more reasonable.



Left, the classic cut of Armani. *Above, the M&S* alternative

LIBERTY EVENING

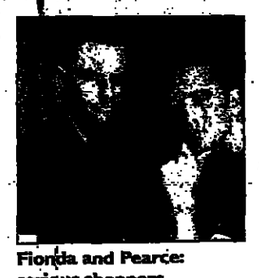
THE *Independent* is hosting a reader evening at Liberty on Wednesday 25 March, 6.30pm-8.30pm. The first 250 readers to apply for tickets will be talked through the collections for men and women by *The Independent* stylist, Sophia Neophitou, and the fashion editor, Tamsin Blanchard. Expert advice will help solve your new season shopping problems and there will be a 15-per-cent discount available on fashion purchases bought on the night. Tickets are £5, including a free goody bag from NARS cosmetics, champagne and canapés. Send a cheque payable to Liberty Plc to Jo Childs, Liberty Press Office, Regent Street, London W1R 6AH.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

This week Holly Davies talks to Andrew Fionda and Ren Pearce, the duo behind the label Pearce Fionda

Ren Pearce

"I BOUGHT two pieces of Galliano when I was a student from Joseph on Sloane Street for a super knock-down price. They were from one of his earliest collections just after he left college, when he was really avant garde. It was about the time when I just started my BA in Nottingham. One piece is this jumbo cord claret-coloured jacket with corks hanging on string from the front. It's completely mad. The other is this shirt which is really, really long; it comes down to my knees. Its made of this patchwork embroidery anglais in really bright colours. The cuffs are huge which gives the whole thing a weird silhouette. They're always the things that I notice once in a blue moon in my cupboard and it brings a smile to my face; I've had lots of good times in both of them!"



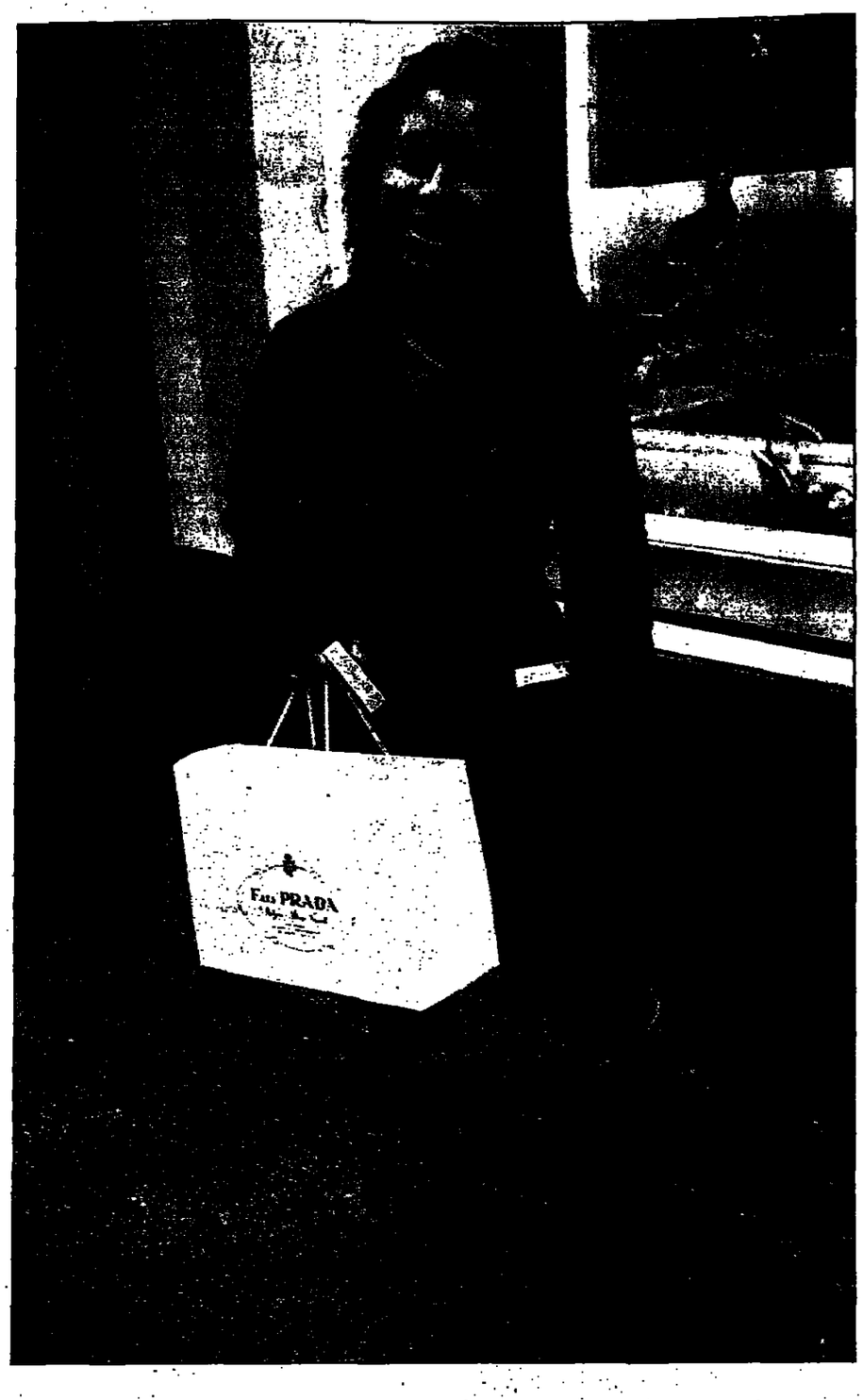
Fionda and Pearce: serious shoppers

Andrew Fionda

"I'M ABSOLUTELY not a hoarder; as soon as I realise I've made a big fashion mistake I throw it away. I'm trying to build a definitive wardrobe of the most essential 50 items. I buy loads of stuff from D Squared. They design for real men, it's quite sexy too. The trousers are low-cut and flat-fronted. I buy it all from a shop on South Molton Street. I'm a complete shopaholic, whenever I'm in town I can't help myself. I've got to the stage of my life when I should be allowed to buy whatever I want. I've admittedly got a fuchsia pink John Richmond shirt at the moment, it hasn't quite made it onto my back yet, and appears to be heading for the edge of my wardrobe rail where I'm sure it will find the floor pretty soon.

"I do keep some of my stuff in a suitcase under my bed, like a sailor shirt that Ren made me years ago. I'd never throw it away but I'd never wear it either.

"My fetish is to collect swimming trunks, I've just got a real thing for them. If I go on holiday I take a different pair for every day. Last year I splashed out on a pair of Gucci flip-flops which cut my feet to shreds. That's the last time I buy anything with big sparkly double G logos."



The Shoe. The Bra. The chase

What are this season's must-have accessories? **Tamsin Blanchard** joins the throng of black-clad fashion editors jostling for the best buys in Milan boutiques

KATE BETTS, the chic, sleek fashion news director from American *Vogue*, is heading for Gucci on Via Montenapoleone, the Bond Street of Milan. She has time for a half-hour shop between shows and knows exactly what she wants.

"There is only one shoe," she says, incredulous that I should be in any doubt that the rows of shelves holding Gucci sandals, loafers, and thongs are an irrelevance. The only shoe worth buying costs 295,000 lire (£98) and has a narrow, chiselled toe, a sling-back and a diamante G set into the back of the two-inch kitten heel. It comes in "buff" (fashion editor speak for beige), black, navy, deep burgundy and red. It also comes in not-mock-croc for 695,000 lire. And if you don't already possess a pair, you simply will not pass muster as a fashion victim. Oh, and if you wait until your return to London to buy them they'll cost nearly twice as much.

Twice a year, the world's most fashionable people – for whom it is a serious profession to know the shape of The Shoe or the precise length of The Skirt for both this season and next – assemble in Milan for Fashion Week.

In Italy, there is nothing frivolous about fashion. La Moda makes the nine o'clock news every night and commands entire pages in newspapers each day. Not surprising when you consider that Armani's empire is worth $752.2m and Gucci's total sales for 1997 are estimated to be close to US$1bn, with shoes accounting for $128m of that figure for the first three-quarters of the year.

And when you walk the streets of Milan's platinum triangle, bounded by Via Montenapoleone, Via Sant Andrea and the narrow, cobbled Via della Spiga, you see why. Women who are interested in fashion, power and status will stop at nothing to buy the ultimate bag, (black patent leather shopper with thin handles from Prada) the must-have shoe (need I say Gucci?) or even the to-die-for bra (Prada again).

You might think that shopping at Gucci or Prada is an intimidating experience. But not in Milan. There, the shops are usually chock full of fairly ordinary looking Japanese tourists working their way through shopping lists. And during Fashion Week, they are also full of black-clad fashion editors, elbowing the tourists out of the way and working themselves into a frenzy with their 30-per-cent press discounts.

Sally Courtis, British *Elle*'s fashion editor, buys most of her clothes from second-hand vintage clothing shops or at Portobello Market in west London. She ventures into Prada to see what the fuss is all about. "It's like old ladies at jumble sales snatching items that don't suit them and squeezing their trotters into an extraordinary amount of brightly coloured shoes," she says. "Kitten heels."

Meanwhile, the educated shoppers who live, eat and breathe fashion are swarming through the stores like a plague of locusts. At the beginning of the week, Gucci wisely stocked up on The Shoe. Towards the end of the week, stocks are beginning to wane and, by Saturday, it is sold out of all but small sizes; a bit like Sainsbury on a Sunday afternoon. The glittery G can be seen twinkling on the heels of fashion editors from the *Vogues* and *Elles* around the globe.

Francesca Fearon, a freelance journalist, throws caution to the wind and buys a pair, admitting: "It's because I'm a fashion victim. The kitten heel suits me. I love the shape of the pointed blunt-edged toe, the glint of the sparkly G on the heel. They are sexy looking ... very sexy." Fearon buys hers in "buff" because she is visiting Gucci at the end of the week – between Ferre and Byblos shows – and this is the only colour left above a size 36.

Despite the fact that Gucci's shows are the hottest ticket in Milan – they predict a safari look for next winter – the new season's clothes seem unimportant. Even Jarvis Cocker, seen joining in the fun, makes a bee line for the shoe department, buying a pair of men's chunky flip-flops in black leather for 290,000 lire.

At Prada, the clothes are faring better than the shoes. Miuccia's perspex wedge heels are not seducing the women who would walk on a six-inch nail if it were fashionable. But some editors are taking note from the catwalks and investing in flat shoes – plain black leather moccasins or backless, spoon-shaped numbers.

The new underwear line is another matter. The company has opened up a chic little boutique on Via della Spiga especially for the collection of banana-yellow satin slips, baby pink satin and tulle bras, silk knitted knickers and raspberry coloured vests. A bra will set you back about 150,000 lire – but how can you resist when it is in pink, this spring's official colour? I can't. Nor can model of the moment Audrey Marnay, caught shopping at Prada's younger line, Miu Miu. She can't resist two pairs of shoes – red patent ankle-strap high heels and flat sports sandals – a pair of navy trousers and a grey jumper.

But even the most die-hard shopping victim is defeated by a single item by Dolce e Gabbana that puts everything else into perspective: a pair of pop socks. As is always the way in fashion, these are no ordinary socks. We first saw them on the catwalk last October. They are black and embroidered heavily with golden wheat sheaves.

The shop assistant unlocks a cupboard and pulls out a rectangular box. Inside, the socks are wrapped in tissue paper, always a sign that you can't afford them. Delicately, she pulls them out, as though antiques from the V&A. How much? "One million, four hundred thousand lire," comes the reply. In any currency, that's a lot of money for a pair of socks. These are new stock. The first delivery of 10 pairs sold out within a week. That's almost £4,750 for 10 pairs of socks that do not come with an anti-snag guarantee.

If you had the choice which would you buy? The socks or a pair of Gucci kitten heels? Or how about a return ticket to New York (you could even pick up a pair of socks for free on the plane). Or would you simply opt for a lifetime's supply of socks from M&S? Ask any fashion die-hard and I could guarantee the answer every time. After all, you wouldn't have to choose between the black and the buff.

Above, from left, Independent senior stylist Sophia Neophitou wears sage-green ankle-strap shoes by Stephane Kelian for Martine Sitbon; Observer fashion editor Jo Adams in red velvet heels by Michel Perry; and Australian Vogue's Edwina McCann wears the shoe of the season, Gucci 'kitten heel' black slingbacks

Top, clockwise from left: make-up artist Liz Collins with her Prada purchases; Kate Betts of American Vogue shopping at Prada; model Audrey Marnay at Miu Miu; Ornella Boscolo, fashion editor of Italian magazine Cento Cose, also at Miu Miu

Photographs: Kevin Foord

The trouble with men: From childhood to fatherhood, the male of the species feels under attack

If life is not enough

JACK O'SULLIVAN

IN THE picture on the right, Tony Dwyer looks happy. A glancing smile caught by an unexpected photograph suggests the kind, considerate person everyone remembers. The lank hair in need of a wash tells you he wasn't trendy: he went everywhere in that jacket and jeans. He did not try to impress with his appearance. And he was shy – in other posed pictures he hid his face with his hand. But this photograph shows good old Tony who always wiped his feet when visiting friends' houses, the young man who would gladly mow your lawn, someone whose sensitivity to suffering stopped him eating meat from the age of 12. There is no hint in this image of what drives a young man of 18 to walk off the top of a multi-storey car park one morning and end his life.

Indeed, even those who knew him best still cannot make sense of his suicide last August. They have studied his final day in minute detail. They know that, the night before, Tony had visited the local supermarket as usual with his dad to buy Pop Tarts (he ate them as usual for breakfast on the morning of his death). And of course, he picked up Yorkshire puddings that he would have eaten as usual the following Sunday, putting roast potatoes in the middle, but eschewing the customary beef. Six minutes before he died, we know he drew £30 from a cash machine, money which was never recovered. His family assume he gave it to a beggar.

When the police asked his mother, Diana, to identify his body, she laughed, out of shock. It couldn't possibly be Tony. Someone must have stolen his ID, she said. And even when she knew it was him, she was convinced that someone must have pushed him. But the police told her that the event had been recorded on the video in the car park, in Nottingham. At 10.24am on Tuesday 5 August, Tony Dwyer walked off the roof. Walked. He did not jump. The precise time of his suicide is recorded on his funeral order of service. But no reason is given. He left no note.

There are many cases like this every year, as hundreds of young people kill themselves: in 1995 632 young men and 151 young women under 25 died by their own hands. Only last week, Daniel Kirwan, 16, was found hanging from a tree at his home in Cheshire. Recently, Richard Todd, the actor, has written movingly about how his son Seamas, 20, shot himself after a two-year depressive illness. The statistics for young men are particularly worrying – suicide attempts among this group have doubled in the past decade. Although far more women than men make suicide attempts, those by men are much more likely to prove fatal.

The epidemic has prompted the creation of Papyrus, a support group for parents whose sons have killed themselves. They have conducted research among members, in an attempt to identify common themes and enable other parents to spot the danger signs before it is too late.

Jean Kerr, a founder whose 17-year-old son, Edward, took his life in 1989, has questioned 79 sets of parents. She is convinced that depressive illness in young people, sparked off by the stresses of adolescence, is at the heart of the problem. She has found that signs of illness that can be recognised with hindsight were missed at the time.

Many of those who have died, she says, were very loving people, just like Tony Dwyer. The type who never complain. Suicide notes, she says, speak of, "how the individual feels that the family will be better off without them ... These are deeply caring and sensitive people who, even in their extreme depression are often trying to lessen the pain of others. A suicide note is, I believe, often the final act of love."

The irony is that these caring people leave their families devastated. "What hurts me most," Diana Dwyer says, "is that Tony cannot have realised what he was doing to us, because there was no way he would have done it if he had known."

So why did Tony Dwyer kill himself? You can speculate, as his family has done endlessly. Was the break-up of his parents' marriage the previous year a factor; Tony stayed with his father, while his mother moved nearby with his brother and sister? Perhaps, although no one can remember him talking about it. Maybe, like many suicide victims, he was fretting about exam results. He needed three Cs at A-level to win at place to study chemistry at Leicester University. Ten days after his death his family learned his results: he had only just made the grade.

Joe, his 16-year old brother, wonders whether the future became overwhelming as Tony stood at the brink of adulthood. "Maybe," he says, "he was just scared and did not see the point of going on. Maybe he thought it was too much hassle. Maybe, he had been thinking about it for so long, it all piled on top of him and he just couldn't carry on."

But this is all "maybe", because no one knows for sure. James Spicer, Tony's only close non-family friend, had seen him several times a week for six years. "I used to say, 'Are you OK, Tony?' and he always said he was fine. He never said how he felt. He was polite, well-mannered, no one hated him. But he bottled everything up and it seems that's how it came out in the end."

Emotional withdrawal also bothers his mother. "If Tony had been feeling bad," she says, "I don't think he would have known what to do or where to go for help. I don't think teenagers would think of going, say, to Childline. They think of themselves as more adult."

She is convinced that his suicide was the result of a momentary decision. It could have been avoided if Tony had known how to share his feelings. "I still can't see him sitting down eating Pop Tarts that morning saying to himself, 'I'm going to commit suicide today'. I just can't see it at all."

Papyrus can be contacted at : 01706 214449. Parentline, which also offers advice is on 01702 559900.

Last look: A final photograph of Tony and, left, his mother Diana and sister, Jo

Photograph, left, Rui Xavier

Being middle class makes boys a target

THE Bash Street Kids have always given Lord Snooty and his school chums a hard time. But today there is a disturbing edge of violence to the taunting which goes on outside the school gates, where a smart blazer acts as a red rag. Middle-class pupils at posh(-ish) schools are becoming victims of dangerous schoolboy battles which are not so much about race but class.

The problems of school rivalries were highlighted last week with the attack on 14-year-old Euan Blair, son of the Prime Minister. The surprising thing about it was that it hadn't happened before – not because he is the son of Tony Blair, but because he is just the sort of lad who gets picked on – a boy in a uniform, attending what is perceived to be a toffs' school – in his case the grant-maintained Roman Catholic Oratory in Fulham, south-west London.

Most boys of 13 have experienced at least one incident which dents their confidence – whether it is a a kicking from rival schoolboys or a mugging at knife-point. Young teenagers are easy prey for older boys because they have not yet had their rough edges rubbed off, particularly if they are at a selective or independent school.

The scale of the problem is difficult to assess because so many incidents go unreported, even to parents. But according to Michele Elliott, director of the children's charity Kidscape, the problem of violent school rivalry is getting worse. "It's a burning issue," she says. For some the experience is so distressing that they refuse to attend school.

A straw poll she conducted recently highlighted how common the problem is. When she talked to a class of 22 13-year-old boys in a middle-class north London school recently, 20 said they had experienced some form of attack, yet only one had told his parents. It is not hard to see why: teenagers do not want to relinquish the precious new freedoms their parents have just begun to grant.

When children do report the incidents to their parents, they can be are almost blasé in their response. As one mother with three teenage sons at an independent school in West London puts it: "All teenage boys get mugged. It's a fact of life – they just have to learn to deal with it."

Michael Solomon Williams, 15, has endured three frightening incidents – an attack by a gang of five on the Tube going home to north London and two of demands for money. "We just did what they said: we put our arms up and they searched us," he says. "It wasn't nice but it wasn't too bad. The Tube attack was difficult to forget because it was on the route we take every day."

Michael has received little advice on such situations from his school. And while many schools invite police liaison officers in, their main concern seems to be drugs.

Another boy, Nathan Keiller, has endured three recent attacks, the last a week before the incident involving Euan Blair. Nathan who, like Euan, is 14, was mugged while shopping in Oxford Street with a friend. Later the police said half-term breaks always offered rich pickings for thieves. Such experiences encourage teenagers to carry their money in their socks and hide their watches at an alarmingly early age. But there is not much they can do to disguise their unbroken voices and their middle-class air.

> All teenage boys get mugged – it's a fact of life. They just have to deal with it

What makes the situation often worse is the public's refusal to help or even to acknowledge the problem.

When two older teenagers approached Nathan and his friend from behind, one threw his arms round him, said he had a knife and demanded Nathan's plastic carrier. Because they didn't fancy the contents they took the receipt to get the money back. Meanwhile Nathan's friend ran to get help but the person he stopped did not want to know.

Like most parents in his situation, Nathan's father Michael is puzzled. "The first time Nathan had money stolen in the street he was really upset because it seemed so dangerous and frightening," he says. "What upset him this time is that he didn't have the nous to avoid it. He just felt so humiliated and disappointed with himself.

"It's hard for us as parents, because with most things you can say when it happened to me I did this or that But I haven't any experience of this. You keep thinking, maybe we shouldn't be letting him do these things at his age. Instead we have long conversations about how we can avoid it happening again. My view is that these things are going to happen but it's very unlikely that he's going to get badly hurt. But that doesn't make it any less frightening for him."

Police say they do go into schools to talk about personal safety as much as crime and drugs. But Michelle Elliott of Kidscape believes that schools could do much more to prevent incidents and prepare their pupils. After fights at her 16-year-old son's school involving gangs from a rival comprehensive the parents organised their own patrol. "A few parents standing on the street corner with cameras is worth a thousand policemen – these kids don't want their photographs taken."

For parents, the situation is a particularly difficult one, as they try to balance the need to encourage some independence in their children with the need to protect them. Some offer their children lifts and mobile phones and self-defence courses. Others like Michael Solomon-Williams' mother Juliet, believe that experience – getting out and about – is the best protection. She is relieved that her son now carries a personal alarm but would feel better if she thought anyone would respond if he set it off. When she recently stood by a teenager who was being attacked on a bus the boy was amazed. "Nobody had ever helped him before," she says. "I was upset that he was so surprised – it should be the norm that people stop and help, otherwise teenage boys will see themselves as on their own.

Celia Dodd

Wanted: justice for fathers whose bond has been broken

"I WAS naive enough to think that my name on the birth certificate meant something," Phil says bitterly. "But really it means nothing at all."

Phil has been to court more than 20 times in the past couple of years to try to get access to his son. He split up with the child's mother soon after the birth and has been trying ever since to play an active role in his child's life. "I've worked hard to try and establish a bond between us. I think it's important that a child has two parents and I'm determined to play my part."

Stephen has also struggled over the last few years to see the twins whose birth he witnessed. He has not seen them at all for a year and a half because the mother has allowed them to be adopted. As an unmarried father without parental responsibility he could not stop her.

What Phil and Stephen and countless other unmarried fathers do not realise is that as the law stands they have very little right to any say in their children's upbringing if they split from the mother.

"The mother can take the children abroad, change their names, change their schools and the father does not need to be consulted," says Jim Parton, chairman of Families Need Fathers. But now Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, is considering whether unmarried fathers who sign their names on the birth certificate should be offered parental rights. Such a proposal would give a father the right to see a child regnlarly even if he left soon after the registration of the birth.

The threatened tie: Many fathers lose contact

At the moment a name on the birth certificate is not enough; what such a father needs is "parental responsibility" – a concept introduced by the Children Act 1989 which it defines as "all the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property".

Mothers automatically have parental responsibility, as do married fathers. The Act also ensured that unmarried fathers could acquire parental responsibility through the courts – it did not automatically confer parental responsibility on them because of a need to protect vulnerable, unmarried mothers, especially those whose children had been born as a result of violent or coercive relationships. If Lord Irvine's proposals become law, a father would not need to go through this process in order to have these rights.

Many unmarried fathers are unaware that at the moment parental responsibility is something that is not conferred automatically. In 1996 649,485 births were registered in England and Wales, of which more than a third were outside marriage. In more than three quarters of these cases the father's details were included on the birth certificate.

But in the same year, 1996, the courts made only 5,587 parental responsibility orders, and only around 3,000 parental responsibility agreements are registered each year.

While the possession of parental responsibility probably has little effect on a father's role day to day while the parents are living together or co-operating in their arrangements for the children, should the relationship breaks down there can be serious problems.

"I was supporting my child financially but I didn't have any rights," Phil says. "I had been there at the birth, but the mother didn't want to live with me and I was being put in an unbearable situation."

He discovered the concept of parental responsibility late. "So I went to the court – I represented myself – and asked for it. Legal aid is very hard to come by. The judge delayed it for a years saying he wanted to see more commitment from me. But how can you show commitment when the mother is hostile to you and won't let you see the child?

"I've been back to the courts 23 times at the taxpayer's expense, waiting for a judge to make orders – and then the mother breaks them."

Stephen had also been present at the birth of his twins. The mother, he says, had been unsure of her ability to cope before then and had mentioned having the two of them adopted. "She said she couldn't cope. She told me that before the birth but I never thought she would actually take the legal option. It seemed like she was trying to exclude me from their lives. But I don't want to be an absent father. I wanted to have children with her and we did have a close relationship. I wasn't consulted on anything, even the adoption. The parents are a young couple who feel I shouldn't have any contact."

Jim Parton of Families Need Fathers said that such experiences were common. "We welcome the changes the Lord Chancellor is considering; they are long overdue. We see people having real problems establishing parental responsibility – a huge waste of money on the litigation side and a huge waste of emotional energy. Most unmarried fathers have no idea of the situation.

"I used to be quite outgoing but now I feel like an empty shell," Stephen says. "And it's not just me that's been harmed. My mother is now restricted from seeing her grandchildren. I am a survivor I think at the end but it's been very damaging."

Names have been changed

Glenda Cooper

Professor Martin Hollis

"THE FOX knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Martin Hollis was a hedgehog, pursuing the elusive goal of reason with passionate commitment for over 30 years. But he was also a fox, raiding every discipline to sustain his restless, often impatient, intellect.

By his death he had published 10 books, four edited collections and some 90 papers. In the Sixties rationality was threatened by relativism in the social sciences. By the Nineties the threat had assumed the more seductive hues of post-modernism. Against this background Hollis defended reason by deepening our understanding of it.

The key to Hollis's rationalism was "the epistemological unity of mankind", the view that "some beliefs are universal . . . There are, because there have to be, percepts and concepts shared by all who can understand each other." Hollis acknowledged P.F. Strawson's influence in his early formulations of the rationality assumption.

His own contribution became distinctive as he engaged with social sciences, wrestling with each of them until it submitted to the canons of reason. Surprisingly, such presumption did not outrage practising social scientists, since Hollis, unlike the caricatured armchair philosopher, successfully acquired their vocabulary and techniques. He published jointly with economists, political scientists, social workers and international relations theorists.

In game theory and social choice theory Hollis hit a seam of gold in the form of powerful techniques for handling orders of preference. By manipulating those techniques he transmuted the *instrumental* rationality familiar to economists into *expressive* rationality: an enriched notion of reason, embracing moral as well as intellectual virtues, but still compatible with economic theory. It would reconcile the drive of the citizen towards community, with that of *homo economicus* towards profit maximisation – work for the alchemist rather than the miner, perhaps.

Hollis translated Rousseau's revolutionary vision of "a remarkable change in man" into a more down-to-earth picture of ordinary people who manage, even in an imperfect world, to harmonise individual aspirations and social roles, autonomy and duty, trust and reason.

Hollis's work was genuinely original but oblique to current philosophical fashions and slow to receive the recognition it deserved. Though lacking in personal ambition, Hollis finally acquired numerous honours, as editor of the German-English philosophical journal *Ratio* (1980-87), as visiting professor in Germany and the United States, and as lecturer in China and India. His most prized laurel was his Fellowship of the British Academy, where he became Council member and chair of the Philosophy Section.

Martin Hollis was born into a mandarin family of public servants and Anglican bishops. His father was a senior diplomat, and an uncle was Roger Hollis of MI5 fame. He was a scholar at Winchester, national serviceman in the Royal Artillery, and Classics scholar at New College, Oxford, where he read PPE.

After graduating he passed out top of the Foreign Office open competition, and won a Harkness Fellowship to study at Berkeley and Harvard. These years, 1961-63, marked a turning-point in Hollis's life. During them he met his future wife, Patricia Wells. The sociology he first encountered in California would influence him for the rest of his life, as would the work of W.V.O. Quine and John Rawls at Harvard.

Returning to England, Hollis spent 1963-66 at the FCO acquiring his formidable administrative skills, but bored by the lack of intellectual challenge. Sent to Heidelberg to learn German, he returned to find himself posted to Moscow.

Hollis: inscrutable

This was the last straw for a rational man, who was already moonlighting in Oxford, giving philosophy tutorials at New College and Balliol. He left the FCO. He and his wife both received appointments at the University of East Anglia, he in philosophy, she in history.

From 1967 until his death he would remain in Norwich, promoted Senior Lecturer in 1972, and Professor in 1982. The Sixties were halcyon days for the new universities, affectionately satirised by Hollis's UEA friend Malcolm Bradbury in his novel *The History Man* (1975). Recruited before the first students had graduated, when teaching was in temporary huts and administration in an elegant Jacobean mansion, the Hollises had the zeal of new converts, true believers in a system they were helping to create.

Martin Hollis embraced Norwich life, serving as JP for 10 years and supporting Patricia's career in local politics. At UEA he performed every administrative duty, as head of philosophy, Dean of his School and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the university. His speed and efficiency left his less talented colleagues breathless, particularly as his output of distinguished research work never slackened.

But by the time he became PVC in 1992 the young university had become middle-aged. With economic cuts the demand was to process more students for less money. Despite its innovations UEA had maintained a successful system of final examinations (albeit tempered by continuous assessment) and an academic year of three terms. Hollis was given the unenviable task of "delivering" a new regime of "modular" units examined twice yearly at the end of the two semesters that replaced the old terms. The change was time-consuming and disruptive. Hollis did his duty in what he called the administrative "bunker" with customary expertise, but little enthusiasm. His loyalty was unwavering, his sense of irony sharpened by the tasks now expected of him. Things had come full circle from his days at the FCO.

This story of intellectual achievement and corporate service leaves much of the man in shadow. Those who knew Hollis for a quarter of a century found him as inscrutable as they did when they first encountered him. He loved chess, which he played at a high level and which he often used to illustrate philosophical moves. He played reckless bridge and invented countless board games of his own. Puzzles intrigued him. A collection of the brain-teasers he set for the *New Scientist* was published as *Tantalizers* in 1970.

He was both intensely sociable and intensely private. He wrote as he talked, allusively, self-deprecatingly, teasingly. His clarity was deceptive. From his compressed epigrams his readers and listeners made their own plodding reconstructions. His favourite forum was the informal but regular meeting of people with shared enthusiasms. He was a founder of the East Anglia Philosophy Triangle which met in Cambridge, Colchester and Norwich. The gatherings of the Peripatetics, a discussion group of local friends, were more intimate.

In August 1996 Hollis was still in brilliant form, teaching at the Philosophy Summer School near Guanzhou, China, luring yet another audience into the intricacies of game theory. Early in 1997 the symptoms of a malignant brain tumour appeared, and before Easter he took sick leave. Most cruel for the master wordsmith, the capacity for language was the first to be affected. Though fading fast, he remained involved in meetings and discussions with close friends and colleagues.

In one poignant paper Martin Hollis had quoted Rilke: "The wish to have a death of one's own is growing ever rarer. Only a while yet and it will be just as rare to have a death of one's own." He bore his last terrible days with uncomplaining fortitude. He died in his home in the care of his wife and sons he loved. Perhaps that is something like a death of one's own.

Timothy O'Hagan

James Martin Hollis, philosopher; born London 14 March 1938; Lecturer, University of East Anglia 1967-72, Senior Lecturer 1972-81, Professor of Philosophy 1981-98, Dean of School of Economic and Social Studies 1983-86, Pro-Vice-Chancellor 1992-95; Editor, Ratio 1980-87; FBA 1990; married 1965 Patricia Wells (created 1990 Baroness Hollis of Heigham; two sons); died Norwich 27 February 1998.

Marjorie and her younger brother Harold Wilson: 'I suppose he was a sort of birthday present'

Marjorie Wilson

IT IS difficult to be the male spouse of a leading lady politician. I suspect it is no less difficult being the big sister of a Prime Minister. Marjorie Wilson succeeded in being a lady of considerable worth in her own right. After studying Chemistry at Leeds University, she became a teacher, later moving to Cornwall, where she spent many years as headmistress of St Blazey's Infants School and, from 1966 to 1971, of Biscovey Infants School.

David Blackford, Secretary of the Cornwall branch of the National Association of Head Teachers, describes her as "caring". Nothing, he says, was too much trouble for her. She was respected by staff and parents alike and a keen member of his association. "Nobody would ever have been aware of the special circumstances of her relationship with the Prime Minister."

Marjorie used to bring their father, Herbert Wilson, a widower, to Labour Party conferences, where they both became something of a benign institution. I remember her irreverent outpourings at Scarborough in 1967. Harold, she told us, was born the day before her seventh birthday. "I suppose he was a sort of birthday present." Marjorie would talk about him as if he were half baby and half doll, someone to be protected.

Actually Harold Wilson owed Marjorie a great deal, as she it was who was to look after his father and carry many of the family responsibilities. Without her he might not have had the time so assiduously to climb the Labour Party tree.

All was not sweetness and light. As the secretary of the Labour Party Standing Conference on the Sciences and a young MP, Harold Wilson wanted me to talk at length to his father Herbert, who had been a chemist, about the science policy, during the white heat of the technological revolution.

Later, when I told him genuinely that his father had been interesting and his sister charming, he looked quizzically, in a particular Harold Wilson way, as if to say, "That's only half the story." Ever a gossip, he told me that Marjorie had bullied him and recalled that during one summer holiday – I think in Morecambe – he had nearly lost his life at her hands. Going for a walk along the sea-front he and his sister had had a fight. Marjorie overpowered him and hurled him with all his clothes on into the sea. He was terrified and his heavy garments were soaked through. He had to be taken to a shop to get new clothes.

This may have been Marjorie's revenge for all the attention that came to her young brother. As Ben Pimlott put it in his brilliant and perceptive biography, *Harold Wilson* (1992), "Marjorie was expected to watch Harold's brilliant successes and to be enthusiastic about them, almost as a third parent."

Marjorie's successes were automatically regarded as less of an achievement. There is an oft-repeated story which Harold Wilson would tell against himself. When Marjorie told her parents excitedly that she had won a scholarship to Huddersfield Girls High School, Harold, then four years of age, complained, "I want a 'ship' too." When Herbert Wilson made a celebrated sightseeing trip to London and visited Downing Street, it was Harold and not Marjorie who had a photograph taken outside the door of No 10.

The relationship between brother and sister, however, became very good. When Harold was called to Chequers to see Clem Attlee in 1947, he was staying with Marjorie at her St Austell bungalow (she had moved to Cornwall with her mother shortly after her father started to work there in 1938); they spent the evening making guesses about what Attlee would offer.

Marjorie wanted to know on Monday morning where her brother was to go in the Government, so he arranged to leave a symbolic message on her breakfast table on his way back to Mullion Cove in Cornwall where he used to stay. A lump of coal would mean that he was to be Minister of Fuel and Power, a strip of metal would mean Minister of Supply and a slice of bread Minister of Food. Neither of them had imagined that he would be given the presidency of the Board of Trade.

Tam Dalyell

Marjorie Wilson, schoolteacher: born Manchester 12 March 1909; MBE 1972; died Truro, Cornwall 8 March 1998.

Judge Brian Walsh

BRIAN WALSH was widely hailed as one of Ireland's greatest judges. His abilities were reflected in the speed of his promotion through a profession where youth is not normally an asset. A High Court judge at the unheard-of age of 39, he was there just two years before being promoted to the powerful Supreme Court.

Early experience as a barrister was gained on the border circuit in Cavan-Monaghan where he displayed an enormous appetite for work. His arrival on the bench coincided with a period of discontent with the accepted order in the post-Independence Catholic-leaning state.

The historian Joe Lee, in his book *Ireland 1912-1985* (1989), saw Walsh's elevation as part of the overturning of the monolithic state ethos fostered under Cosgrave, de Valera and Costello governments when dissidents "either emigrated or were marginalised". Walsh was "the outstanding legal reforming mind of his generation", Lee wrote.

Perhaps more than any other decision, Walsh's 1972 ruling in *Byrne vs Ireland*, allowing the citizen to sue the state, altered legal history. It ended a British-inherited tradition based on the presumption that, as the barrister Seamus McKenna put it, "the Crown could do no wrong".

Other landmark judgments echoing this commitment to the individual's rights included his 1966 ruling that bail could not be withheld simply because of a belief that a defendant might commit further offences if freed.

In the landmark 1973 McGee case, he ruled the 1935 ban on the importation of contraceptives was unconstitutional. This encouraged a more liberal social climate and a gradual improvement in the status of Irish women after generations of hardship associated with rearing large families on limited incomes.

His 1974 appointment as leader of Dublin's side on the Anglo-Irish Law Enforcement Commission, a creation of the Sunningdale Agreement, sent in the state's most trenchant defender of civil rights at a time of international anger over treatment of prisoners in custody in Northern Ireland.

He retained his independent thinking until the end of his career, with a landmark 1987 decision forcing the Dublin government to hold a referendum before it could ratify the Single European Act. Controversially, he also protected the "political exception" when the Supreme Court directed that suspects not be extradited where they were likely to suffer ill-treatment.

This came in the case of the Maze escapers Dermot Finucane and James Pius Clarke, the latter having been a victim of alleged sustained beatings during earlier custody in Northern Ireland. The five judges all bluntly agreed on "the probable risk that if Finucane were returned [to Northern Ireland] he would be assaulted or injured by the illegal actions of prison officers".

Earlier, Walsh's hostility to extraditing suspects back to that regime had seen sparks fly between himself and a colleague on the Law Enforcement Commission, Mr Justice Seamus Henchy. The two had other disagreements, notably over homosexuality, on which Henchy took the more liberal view in the long-running saga which led eventually to decriminalisation.

Walsh was also opposed to what he felt were over-liberal attitudes which he feared might encourage demand for abortion by making it an easy option and backed the anti-abortion clause in the Irish Constitution.

Alan Murdoch

Brian Walsh, barrister and judge: born Dublin 23 March 1918; called to the Irish Bar 1941, Inner Bar 1954; High Court judge 1959-61, Supreme Court judge 1961-90; member, World Association of Judges 1966-98; leader of Irish delegation on Anglo-Irish Law Enforcement Commission, 1974; President, Irish Law Reform Commission 1975-85; member, European Court of Human Rights 1980-98; married 1944 Noreen Joyce (one son, four daughters); died Dublin 9 March 1998.

Walsh: a reformer

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2092 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2011) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

Lectures

National Gallery: Colin Wiggins, "Painting and Sculpture (2): Anthony Caro, avant-garde and tradition", 1pm; Bruce Boucher, "The 'Search for Truth': John Pope-Hennessy and the study of Italian sculpture", 6.30pm.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Nancy Osborn, "Developments in Dress and Dressmaking 1820-80", 2.30pm.

London School of Economics (Lionel Robbins Memorial Lecture): Professor Daniel Khaneman, "Rationality, Utility and the Mind", 5.30pm.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen, Patron, accompanied by **The Duke of Edinburgh,** attends a service in St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church, London WC2, to mark the tercentenary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. **The Duke of Edinburgh,** Honorary Fellow, attends a lunch at the Institute of Marine Engineers, the Memorial Building, London EC3. **The Princess Royal** begins her visit to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. **The Duke of Gloucester** opens YMCA's "Care in the Community" home, The Sanctuary, West Molesey, Surrey, and afterwards opens the extension to St Raphael's Hospice, St Anthony's Hospital, North Cheam, Surrey. **The Duke of Kent** visits the School of Clinical Medicine, the Wolfson Brain Imaging Centre and the Brain Repair Centre, at Cambridge University.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

Mr Douglas Adams, author, 46; Mr Terence Alexander, actor, 75; Miss Agatha Barbara, former President of Malta, 75; Sir John Batten, former physician to the Queen, 74; Dr Alan Betts, Emeritus Professor, Royal Veterinary College, 71; Miss Louise Brough, tennis champion, 75; Sir Kenneth Dover, Chancellor, St Andrews University, 78; Mr Dennis Enright, author, poet and critic, 78; Mr Peter Eyre, actor, 56; Mr David Gentleman, designer and painter, 68; Mr Jonathan Gestetner, chairman, Marlborough Rare Books, 58; Professor Thomas Gray, anaesthetist, 85; Viscount Hood, former chairman, Petrofina UK, 84; Lord Lawson of Blaby, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, 66; Sir Henry Marking, former deputy chairman and managing director, British Airways, 78; Mr Timothy Mason, director, Museum and Galleries Commission, 53; Mr Alan Montgomery, former High Commissioner to Tanzania, 60; Air Marshal Sir Alec Morris, engineering consultant, 72; Lord Mowbray, Seagrave and Stourton, former Deputy Chief Opposition Whip in the House of Lords, 75; Mr Rupert Murdoch, newspaper proprietor, 67; Miss Erica O'Donnell, founder, Centre for the History of the Fine and Decorative Arts, 78; Sir Malcolm Pill, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 60; Sir Keith Speed, former MP, 64; Sir Iain Tennant, former Lord-Lieutenant of Morayshire, 79; Miss Patricia Tindale, architect, 72; Mr Ron Todd, former general secretary, TGWU, 71; Sir Peter Walters, chairman, SmithKline Beecham, 67; The Right Rev John Went, Bishop of Tewkesbury, 54; Lord Wilberforce, former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, 91; Dr Tony Wright MP, 50; Mr Alan Yentob, Director of Television, 51.

Anniversaries

Births: Torquato Tasso, poet and playwright, 1544; Sir Henry Tate, sugar refiner and art collector, 1819; Carl Sprague Ruggles, violinist and composer, 1876; Sir Malcolm Campbell, speed record holder, 1885; Dorothy Gish (le Guiche), silent screen actress, 1898; Lord Wilson of Rievaulx (John Harold Wilson), former prime minister, 1916. **Deaths:** Hannah Cowley (Parkhouse), playwright and poet, 1809; Rolf Boldrewood (Thomas Alexander Browne), author, 1915; Sir Alexander Fleming, bacteriologist, 1955; Erle Stanley Gardner, lawyer, author and creator of "Perry Mason", 1970. **On this day:** Chelsea Hospital for old soldiers was founded, 1682; the first successful English daily newspaper, the single-sheet *Daily Courant*, was published near Fleet Street, London, 1702; the first performance of Verdi's *Rigoletto* was given, Venice 1851; the Bradfield reservoir, near Sheffield, burst its banks, and 250 people lost their lives, 1864; the first telephone call was made by Alexander Graham Bell, 1876; the Great Blizzard began in the United States, 1888; the British blockade of Germany began, 1915; Baghdad was captured from the Turks by the British, 1917; the first London performance of the musical show *No, No, Nanette* was presented, London 1925; following a proclamation by Hermann Goering, the Luftwaffe, or German air force, was created, 1935; the German army marched into Austria, 1938; meat rationing began in Britain, 1940; Mount Etna, Sicily, erupted, 1974. **Today** is the Feast Day of St Aurea, St Benedict of Milan, St Constantine of Cornwall, St Eulogius of Cordova, St Oengus or Aengus the Culdee, St Sophronius of Jerusalem, St Teresa Margaret Redi and St Vindician.

LAW REPORT: *11 MARCH 1998*

Resale of unexpired tickets amounted to theft

Regina v Marshall and others; Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (Lord Justice Mantell, Mrs Justice Ebsworth and Judge Martin Stephens QC) 6 March 1998

THE OBTAINING of used but unexpired tickets or travel cards from members of the public at London Underground stations and their resale to other potential customers amounted to theft.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeals of Adrian John Marshall, Robert Peter Coombes and Birol Eren against their convictions of theft on pleas of guilty tendered after a ruling by the judge.

Each of the three appellants had been observed and recorded by video cameras at Victoria Underground Station obtaining underground tickets or travel cards from members of the public passing through the barriers, and reselling them to other potential customers. At a pre-trial hearing the judge had heard legal argument as to whether or not the appellants were liable to be convicted of theft on the basis of certain agreed facts. He ruled that they were, and in consequence they changed their pleas to guilty.

Nigel Taylor (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for Marshall and Coombes; Jonathan D. Simpson (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for Eren; Roger Smart (Crown Prosecution Service) for the Crown.

Lord Justice Mantell said that the submission made to the judge and repeated on appeal was that in the circumstances, although there had been an assumption of the rights of the owner of the ticket which amounted to an appropriation contrary to section 3 of the Theft Act 1968, there had been no intention on the part of the appellants to deprive London Underground of the ticket. They had intended either to return them directly to London Underground or to do so through the third party buyer without resale to London Underground and without any loss in the virtue of the ticket when returned.

It was submitted that section 6(1) of the 1968 Act, which provided,

> A person appropriating property belonging to another without meaning the other permanently to lose the thing itself is nevertheless to be regarded as having the intention of permanently depriving the other of it if his intention is to treat the thing as his own to dispose of regardless of the other's rights; and borrowing or lending of it might amount to so treating it, but only if the borrowing or lending is for a period and in circumstances making it equivalent to an outright taking or disposal

did not apply, as it was only to be resorted to when there was a resale of the property to the original owner, and, further, that the issuing of the ticket was analogous to the drawing of a cheque in that in each case a chose in action was created, which in the first instance belonged to the customer, and in the second to the payee. So by parity of reasoning with that advanced by Lord Goff in *R v Preddy* [1996] 3 WLR 255 the property acquired belonged to the customer and not London Underground, and there could have been no intention on the part of the appellants to deprive London Underground of the ticket, which would in due course be returned to the possession of London Underground.

Attractive though that submission appeared at first blush, it could not be correct. A "chose in action" was a known legal expression used to describe all personal rights of property which could only be claimed or enforced by action, and not by taking physical possession. On the issuing of an underground ticket a contract was created between London Underground and the purchaser. Under that contract each party had rights and obligations, which were theoretically enforceable by action. It was arguable, therefore, that by the transaction each party had acquired a chose in action, on the one side the right to use the ticket to the extent to which it allowed travel on the underground system, and on the other side the right to insist that the ticket was used by no one other than the purchaser. It was that right which was disregarded when the ticket was acquired by the appellant and sold on.

In the present case, however, the charges were in relation to the tickets and travel cards themselves and a ticket form or travel card was not a chose in action. The fact that the ticket form or travel card might find its way back into the possession London Underground, albeit with its usefulness or "virtue" exhausted, was nothing to the point. The appellants having acknowledged by their pleas that they had been acting dishonestly, there was no reason to consider the convictions unsafe, and the appeals would be dismissed.

Kate O'Hanlon, *Barrister*

THE INDEPENDENT

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Who is to blame for water scandal?

YET ANOTHER privatisation chicken flies home to roost on Labour's roof. Last week the way the Tories sold off British Rail landed on John Prescott's desk. This week we are told his Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions is liable for a huge pensions bill for the state-owned water industry – because, surprise, surprise, most of the choicest of the assets that were meant to pay for water employees' pensions ended up after privatisation in the coffers of the water plcs.

The story is complicated, but it matters a great deal, not just to current pensioners, but potentially to hundreds of thousands of other state employees and to the taxpayers who may have to do the bailing out. Talk by ministers about tight belts and spending limits ceases to convince if – albeit unknowingly – they are presiding over massive profligacy. This imbroglio is not of Labour's making, but it is in the Government's interest to show that it is tidying up the mess. A few executions, figuratively speaking, would help.

This is a tale of divvying-up public sector assets in anyone's interest but the public's. When water was privatised in 1989 employees had the choice of moving to new employers' pensions or staying with existing arrangements. Those who stayed had their pensions guaranteed, they thought, from a fund into which various assets were put. But this "closed" fund got short shrift. Some of its assets were duds, such as a stake in a company that later went bust. This fund is now in huge – £400m plus – deficit, with a great and growing gap between what it can pay out and the obligations it has to pensioners now and to come. Guess who makes up the shortfall – taxpayers.

The story is told in a report today from the National Audit Office. This is the 800-strong team of accountants and specialists charged with ensuring public money is properly spent. It answers to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, who in turn answers to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee. This is the ultimate mechanism to detect and remedy spending abuse. Taxpayers have nowhere else to turn. Yet this report instils a disquieting sense of how little we, or anyone, knows about the vast archipelago of state bodies spending public money. Here the NAO tells only half a story. The recent history of pensions for the water industry is a catalogue of mistakes, perhaps even recklessness with public money. NAO auditors have evidently followed the paper trail. But where are their conclusions? Where, most important, is their bill of indictment?

The public has suffered a huge loss. Who is responsible? Where do we look – to pensions advisers, trustees, fund managers, or to civil servants or Secretaries of State for the Environment? Does Sir John Bourn not know who is answerable – he surely cannot fear naming names, since his reports enjoy parliamentary privilege?

In another corner of the public empire there is the Audit Commission, which oversees council and health service accounts. The district auditors it supervises do name names; they sometimes even surcharge them and disqualify them from public office. Why is there such a disparity between local and national levels in the business of detection and punishment?

With this report Sir John Bourn has let it be known he is anxious about the custodianship of other public-sector pension funds, their assets totalling some £100bn. (If he really wanted to scare us he would also mention the pay-as-you-go pension arrangements for local authority staff which are seriously out of kilter.) But warnings only go so far. The Public Accounts Committee has the power to identify individuals responsible for this farrago. If they cannot be hauled before a court then they at least can be publicly named and shamed. The Government believes in that procedure for miscreant youth. Let us see it, not before time, applied to people who instead of serving the public have by their incompetence or negligence cost the public huge sums of its money.

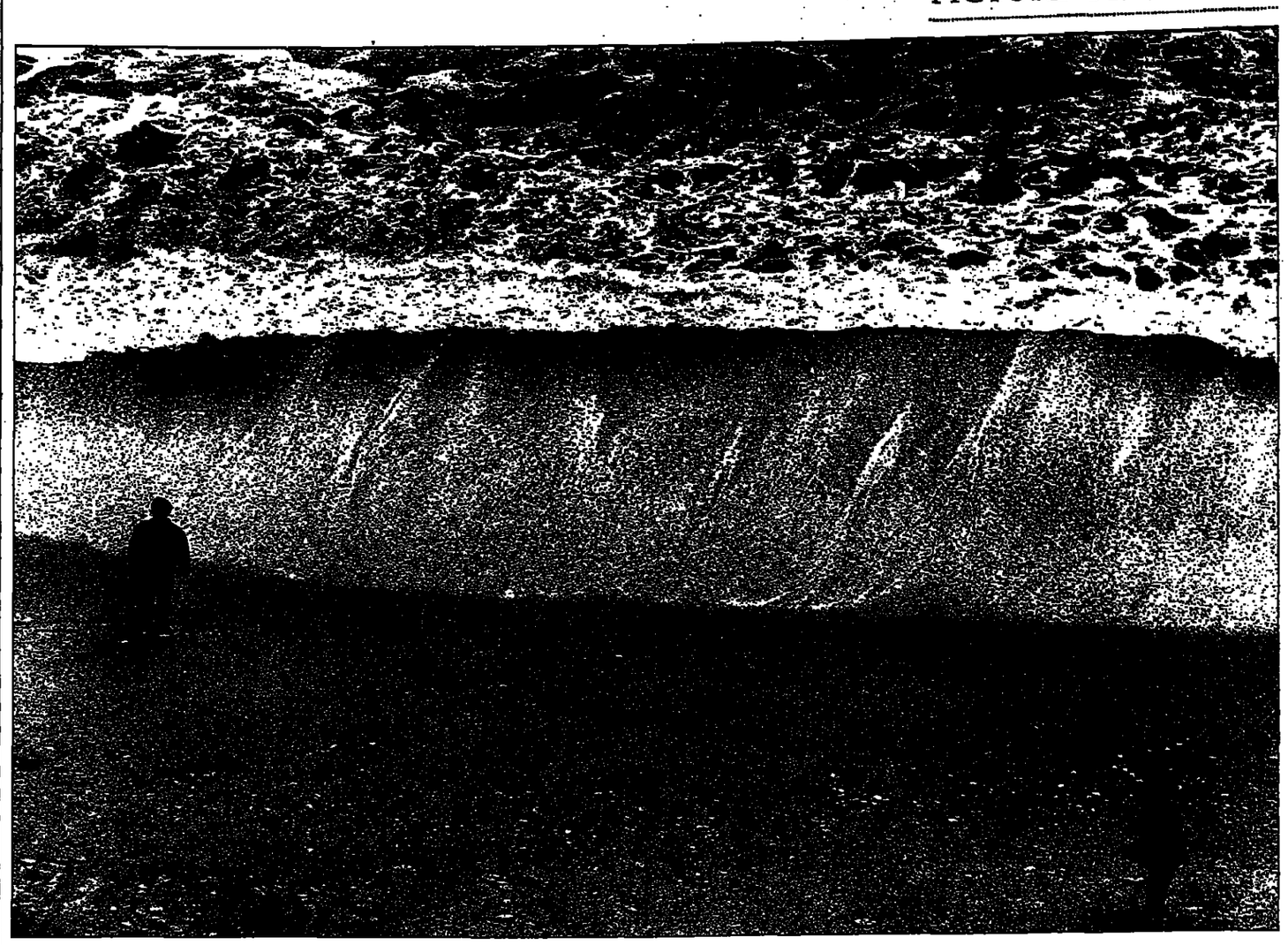
Negative ads can work

KNOCKING COPY works. Forget comedy, romance or the sell based on science: people, it seems, are persuaded by nothing as much as hard-hitting criticism. According to a study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* adverts directed against the tobacco companies and their political cronies turned out to be more effective in stopping people smoking than factual messages trying to persuade them of the health risks.

The key words were "deceitful and manipulative". If cigarette companies were made out to be dishonest and unscrupulous, they were "delegitimised" and people started to ask themselves hard questions about their own behaviour. Becoming aware of what lies behind the tobacco industry's own advertising, smokers measurably changed their ways. It is not an isolated finding. There is European evidence that on controversial issues such as the use of fur by the fashion trade it is the blood-on-the-pelt approach that works best. How many other institutions are there that might be targeted in this way as deceitful and manipulative ... pharmaceuticals, finance houses, certain food producers?

Yet knocking copy has its limits. People in this country say they dislike negative campaigning by political parties, though there is also evidence of its effectiveness. Consumers have an abiding sense of fairness. Shrill-voiced campaigns can be counter-productive, if they make people start to feel an industry or product is being victimised. But that is not something the public are ever likely to feel about tobacco.

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Sand, sea and human figures: a view from the clifftops at Porthbeor beach on the St Anthony Peninsula in Cornwall Photograph: John Voos

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor *and include a daytime telephone number Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.*

Cancer toll in Iraq

YOUR leading article of 5th March spoke of the possibility that the cancers in southern Iraq could have been caused by "the use by the Americans and their allies of depleted uranium shells", or that "the huge refinery fires that burned for weeks during the war may have released cancer-causing fumes".

There were far more oil well and refinery fires in Kuwait than in all of Iraq. The retreating Iraqi troops deliberately set fire to 715 Kuwaiti oil wells and three refineries, which took months, not weeks, to put out. There were tank battles, in which depleted uranium shells were used by the coalition forces, in Kuwait itself as well as southern Iraq. There were also heavy air bombardments of Iraqi troop concentrations all over Kuwait. None of this has caused an epidemic of cancers in Kuwait.

This suggests that the increase of cancers in southern Iraq is more probably due to the breakdown in Saddam Hussein's vast system of weapon manufacture. The low standards of safety in Iraqi chemical weapon factories and storage facilities shocked UN inspectors. Air bombardments on Iraq must have also released amounts of these terrible materials into the air.

Finally, we must not forget the horrifying effects of Saddam Hussein's deliberate use of chemical weapons against insurgents in the southern marshes of Iraq during the period 1991-94. These marshes are located in the southern provinces of Basra and Nasriyah, precisely the areas that your reports cover.

AHMED HUSSEIN
London SW20

School agreements

THE SCHOOL Standards and Framework Bill is due for its third reading in the Commons within the next few days. If this Bill is enacted all school governing bodies will be required to draw up a home school "agreement" and a written "parental declaration". Governors will be required to ensure as far as possible that all parents sign the declaration, to put on record that the parents "accept and acknowledge" their "parental responsibilities" and the "school's expectation of its pupils".

We believe this requirement could lead to division rather than partnership between parent and school and will impose an extra administrative burden on schools.

Rather than the Government imposing this detailed legal requirement on all schools we want to see the Bill amended. Governing bodies should be required instead to draw up a home school policy, following a genuine consultation, which would include parents and staff. The statutory requirement for a parental declaration should be dropped. Then, parents, teachers and governors could decide for themselves at school level if they wished to have a signed agreement as part of their home school policy.

MARGARET McGOWAN, *Advisory Centre for Education;* PAT BALL, *Alliance of Parents and Schools;* MARGARET TULLOCH, *Campaign for State Education;* ALAN DODD, *Parent Teacher Association of Wales;* PETER SMITH, *Association of Teachers and Lecturers;* NIGEL de GRUCHY *National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers;* DOUG McAVOY, *National Union of Teachers;* MARGARET JONES, *Institute of School and College Governors;* HADRIAN SOUTHORN, *National Association of Governors and Managers;* PAT PETCH, *National Governors' Council*
London SW20

Beyond the Dome

GRAHAM Wrathmell (letter, 27 February) criticises the Dome and asks where are the sports events, design, engineering and science, and arts projects for the Millennium.

The Dome is the single biggest project funded by the Millennium Commission and less attention has yet been given to the other projects which will take up the other 80 per cent of Millennium Commission funding. We are funding 186 capital projects including a new world-class stadium in Cardiff to host the Rugby World Cup in 1999, new art galleries such as the new Tate at Bankside (which I believe will be the best modern art gallery in the world) and many science centres such as the International Centre for Life in Newcastle.

Overall, the Commission is investing £2,000m in projects all over the country for the millennium and while the Dome will be the focus of international attention, we should not underplay these important projects already in construction across the UK.

MIKE O'CONNOR
Director, Policy and Corporate Affairs
The Millennium Commission
London SW1

Phone 'rip-offs'

THE DIRECTOR General of Oftel, Don Cruickshank, is to be congratulated on referring mobile phone costs to the Monopolies Commission (report, 6 March).

The charges by Cellnet, BT and Vodafone, which Mr Cruickshank describes as a "rip off", involve another dimension not emphasised in recent reports. Of the five billion calls made from landlines to mobile telephones, a significant number connect to recorded messages stating "no one is available, please try later". For this useless service BT are charging the caller a premium rate of 32p per minute.

Last year my company received a bill from BT for over £190 for calls made by a temporary secretary frantic to contact her boyfriend, whom she was phoning every few minutes. Over a period of a few hours she incurred these exorbitant costs because he had turned off his phone and she was unable to leave a message. If she had telephoned a landline and there was no reply no costs would have been incurred.

BT are required, as a matter of contract, to publish their charges but nowhere in their leaflets is it made explicit that a premium charge of 32p is made for every landline call made to a mobile phone that is turned off.

I and millions of others are being charged for this ingenious so-called service which is quite useless. Perhaps the Monopolies Commission should investigate.

PAUL WINNER
London SW1

Art for all

DAVID RODWAY (letter, 9 March) in his comments on Paul Vallely's appreciation of the Gateshead *Angel of the North* does a disservice to art criticism.

His implication, that only those trained in art are qualified to assess art, ignores the popular and voluble interest in public works of art and the continued investment in them by local councils. Art is an expression, mirror and critique of a culture, and that culture embraces the man in the Gateshead street as much as the academic in London.

JASON M REESE
Lecturer in Engineering
University of Aberdeen

Harmless dope

ANTONY ALEXANDER (letter, 6 March) fears the demotivating and dispiriting effect of cannabis on regular users. He couldn't be more wrong. A year ago I had the pleasure of living for a time with a Moroccan farmer and his family. He and his co-workers smoked dope from dawn till dusk and had done so for years. They showed no lack of motivation and were great fun to get to know.

ROB MURPHY
Newcastle upon Tyne

It's Latin to them

THE IDEA of Latin as a common European second language (letters, 3,4,6 March) would be quite justifiably opposed by the Greeks: first because they have a perfectly good classical language of their own; and second because they were never part of the Western Empire where Latin was the language of trade and administration.

There is a temptation to assume that the new Europe is a recreation of the Latin West, but this ceased to be the case, if it ever was, when the Greeks came on board in 1983, and will be even less so with the accession of (say) Bulgaria and Romania, which like Greece were first Byzantine and then Ottoman before their independence in the last century.

It goes without saying that Latin's associations with the Catholic Church would also be unwelcome in countries with a largely Orthodox tradition. Europe can no longer afford to be identified with one strand of its culture.

HENRY WICKENS
Luxembourg

Lively competition

PAUL McCann says that "no one would seriously consider trying to revive Miss World in the Nineties" (report, 28 February).

Miss World is now arguably the most-watched annual television show in the world, with more than 2 billion viewers in over 150 countries. In this country, Sky believe that there is life in Miss World, for they televise it. We are alive and kicking, and if British terrestrial television cares to show Miss World on television and it doesn't get top rating of the night, we will donate £25,000 to the Variety Club children's charity.

ERIC MORLEY
Executive Chairman
Miss World
London W1

Watery Moon

SO WATER has been found on the Moon. Whatever else, please don't privatise it.

RICHARD WINSTONE
Stroud, Gloucestershire

What really goes on at the BBC – an absolutely, totally genuine fly-on-the-wall report

MILES KINGTON

TODAY I am privileged to bring you an extract from an explosive BBC fly-on-the-wall documentary called *The Beeb*, which goes into the very heart of the BBC and shows the hilarious yet tragic things going on at the top. The programme was made inside the bunker of John Birt, the current Director General of the BBC, with his full knowledge. Here we go...

Birt: We have recently come under a lot of criticism for faking documentaries. Does anyone have anything to say to that?
Man with Glasses: Is this the thing about the Learner Driver?
Birt: Yes.
Man with Glasses: *Oh, that. I can explain that.*
Birt: Go ahead. Explain.
Man with Glasses: We found it would be cheaper to recreate certain scenes, sir, rather than film them at source. We got the subject to tell us what had happened, and then we restaged it and filmed it in a faked version. But it was cheaper, sir. That's what you've always said. Make it cheap.
Birt: I haven't said anything of the sort. What I have always said is, Let's have a leaner, more efficient, more cost-conscious Corporation!
Second Man with Glasses: Same thing, John. It's just that you clothe it in business PR language. Half the time we don't know what you're talking about.
Man Without Glasses: *(very softly)* And the rest of the time we don't care.
Birt: What was that, Will?
Man Without Glasses: *Nothing, sir. I was just wondering if there was a glass of water...*
Birt: Should have brought your own. BBC isn't made of money, you know. Where were we?
Man with Glasses: Cheating in these fly-on-the wall documentaries, sir...
Birt: Right. Has anyone got anything to say on these?
Man with Itch in Right Ear Which He Keeps Scratching: Yes, sir. Well, it strikes me that it's a load of hoo-ha about whether fly-on-the-wall documentaries are recreated or not. Take an example. When we have finished this meeting, a summary of the minutes will go out as a record of it. It will be, if you like, a recreation of this meeting. It will be dreadfully inaccurate. It will be weighted to reflect John Birt's views. It will discard all the argument and feeling. But it will come to be accepted as authentic, even by those who were there, even though it's deeply flawed.
Man with Glasses: That's brilliant.
Man with Itch: Similarly, a lot of TV is faked. The news itself is a rather vapid reconstruction of the real thing. A wide-screen film showing on the small screen is a vapid recreation of the cinema experience. I should think a lot of *You've Been Framed* is faked, even though it's on film. A lot of those stunts must be staged by amateurs just to get Beadle's shilling. Indeed, there was a case the other day of two drunk young men who tried to stage a video clip for Beadle when there was an almighty storm hitting the sea wall of their seaside town. One took the camcorder while the other walked along the sea wall. He was taken by a huge wave and drowned, while his mate was filming the whole thing. This was an attempted stunt which went wrong – and became real!
Birt: What are you trying to say?
Man with Itch: I'm trying to say that in fact the recreated, the faked, the rehearsed, the reconstruction all make BETTER television than the real and actual. Television is all the worse when it is not recreated. *Father Ted* tells you more about the Church and Ireland than a live relayed mass from Dublin would. On TV, the real is less genuine than the fake!
Man with Glasses: God, that's terrific stuff!
Man with Pen: *(pausing and turning to Birt)* What do you think, sir?
Birt: I haven't the faintest idea. I didn't see what he was driving at. If it's not in pseudo-managerial language, I can't understand it.
Man with Itch: My God, I never thought of that. We can't understand the Director General, because of the way he talks – and he can't understand us!

APOLOGY
I have now learnt that some of the above fly-on-the-wall, if not all of it, was in fact recreated using actors and hack writers. Those responsible will be fired.

Failed your exams? Start a business in the playground

HAMISH McRAE

If AMERICAN education is so bad, why do foreigners flock to the US to study? The same question applies here. We worry about the quality of our education, but people come from all over the world to be educated in Britain.

There is one obvious and valid explanation – that the students who come to both countries do so because they are coming to the best universities. The problems in America and Britain are not with our élite universities which are excellent, but with the general mass of the school system. But I have seen several items in the last few weeks that suggest that there is a second and rather different reason for admiring both the US and the British education systems, the schools as well as the universities. This is that while we may be less effective at teaching "hard" skills, such as maths and science, than our Continental and East Asian rivals, we have become very good at fostering "soft" and "loose" skills, including creativity, intuition and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the returns on these skills will be even higher in the next couple of generations than they are now. Most people could be taught to become reasonably competent scientists; it is vastly harder to teach them to be successful entrepreneurs.

On conventional measures the US and UK school systems seem to be about the middle of the pack. There was a squall of stories ten days ago in the US after a report on comparative standards in education put the States towards the bottom of developed countries in maths and science, with the UK doing only a bit better. This is probably right, for there are pretty good comparative statistics going back to the 1960s. I have just seen the results of one such study, discussed at a conference on "Excellence in Education" hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York late last year and published in the March edition of its *Economic Policy Review*.

This study looks at test scores for several years between 1963 and 1991. The main conclusion I would draw is that there has been a general convergence of scores over this period. Back in the 1960s there were enormous differences between Australia, Sweden and the US at the bottom, and Israel, Japan and Belgium at the top. But by 1991 all the countries are clustered in the middle with not much distance between China and Korea at the top and Ireland and Portugal at the bottom.

The UK does not do at all badly in these charts. We suddenly shot to the top in 1985 and have been above the US right through this period. But I think the bigger message is not one about standards but one about comparative advantage. Given the narrowing of the spread of attainment, it has become pretty difficult to retain a significant national advantage in the teaching of "hard" subjects. I'm not saying the teaching of the three "Rs" is unimportant. Far from it. Rather the message is that any competently-run educational system is going to do this adequately well. Comparative advantage will be in "soft" subjects.

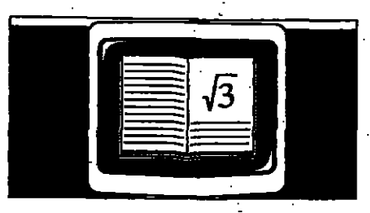
If that is right, educationalists are going to be asked a whole new set of questions, such as "How do you teach entrepreneurship?" To most people that very question will seem pretty odd. Imagine the University of Entrepreneurship of North London. Ridiculous?

Well, no, as two examples show. In Finland there is a government programme teaching people just this. There are lectures, seed funding for new ventures, even subsidies to new would-be entrepreneurs. Is this programme working? Er, not terribly well, I gather. A friend who lectures to these people reckons that it often simply encourages people to start businesses which only produce an adequate living because of subsidies from the taxpayer. But at least the Finns are trying.

The second example is Japan. There they have identified the lack of entrepreneurial zeal as one of the reasons why Japan has failed to recover from recession. They have adapted the word entrepreneur into *an-torepurenah* – don't laugh, we don't have a word in English either – and are now running lectures, courses, foreign visits, study groups and so on in an effort to generate the appropriate spirit.

Well there is certainly no shortage of entrepreneurship in the US or even the UK. How do we do it?

I suppose part of the impetus comes from



relatively low taxes on earned income, and an absence of regulations inhibiting business start-ups. But it can't just be that. I suspect that we teach it, sometimes explicitly, as in the business enterprises that schools run for sixth-formers, but sometimes without really knowing we are doing so. We certainly teach creativity: we have national prizes for creative writing in schools; we have tremendous emphasis on music and drama; we teach creativity in fashion and other design. But I sense that we are also trying to link this creativity with earning money by creating a culture in which people, especially young people, are encouraged to regard setting up a business in their spare time as a fun thing to do.

We have managed to create an educational system that accepts, and even fosters, an element of disorder and encourages questioning. It asks people to look at themselves and the world around them – and think of ways of earning their living other than slogging up corporate or government career ladders.

Isn't this what education should be about? Some people would be appalled at the idea of teaching people to become entrepreneurs. But encouraging people to think for themselves, testing received views, relishing argument and discussion – this is core stuff. It is not a long step beyond that to get people to look at society's needs and desires and use their intelligence to think of ways of satisfying these. Besides, if the Finns and the Japanese think this is a good idea there must be something in it.

Spare the Teletubbies: they've dumbed-up Watch with Mother

Children are more media literate than adults, says **Suzanne Moore**. They don't need the protection of censorship

The Simpsons: Children cannot get away from being confronted with social issues UPP

I HAVE tried, I really have, to remember the golden age of children's television, a time of intellectually stimulating, frightfully educational programming which have since given way to the psychedelic spawn of Satan – Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po. Before the cleverly marketed mutant *Teletubbies* took over we watched and we encouraged our children to watch ... well what exactly? Those whistling socks – *The Clangers*? Those poorly drawn Ninja turtles? Those realistic male role models *Bill and Ben*? That horrid sexist *Postman Pat*? The class-ridden *Thomas the Tank Engine*?

The Teletubbies' biggest achievement is that they have become a symbol for those who want to argue that children's TV is "dumbing down". The fact that the Teletubbies are designed to appeal to pre-school infants: to babies in other words, seems to have been forgotten. If the Teletubbies appeal to toddlers and wacky student types this may be due to the hard truth that compared to grown-ups, toddlers are quite dumb. But of course you mustn't say that because in this game every child is a regular little *tabula rasa* ready to have its head filled with the encyclopaedic knowledge that "proper" children's programmes should be full of.

So let's, in the words of Mrs Merton, have "a heated discussion" about all this nonsense. There has already been one this week at the World Summit on Television for Children. Quite delightfully in the midst of all this concern about what it is correct and proper for children to watch, one female speaker, Alice Cahn of the American Public Service Broadcasting service PBS, called another speaker, Ada Haug, head of pre-school programmes in Norway "an ignorant slut" in an argument over – you've guessed it – the merits of *Teletubbies*. What a shame all this wasn't televised and put out just after *Blue Peter*. But then you can't have everything. An awful lot of tosh is spouted about children and television from people who should know better, yet the only way people will know better is if they sit down and actually watch what is on offer to their kids. No one expects to be a film critic without having seen any films. But everyone from stray MPs to right-wing watchdogs to concerned liberals gets to mouth off about programmes they have heard of but never seen. years of working at home have meant that I have watched a lot of kids' TV with my children. Years of lying in bed have also meant that my children have watched a lot of television without me present to monitor their every reaction. So that means that they are either terribly deviant or terribly average.

In my considered opinion children's television is getting better and better. Yes there are some pretty boring cartoons. "Why don't the people in cartoons ever change their clothes, Mummy?" asked my youngest the other day, but there are also some good dramas, from *The Demon Headmaster* to *Byker Grove* to *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, which kids actually prefer to an unrelieved diet of cartoons. No kid these days can get away from being confronted with social issues, from drugs to abuse to prostitution. There is also a reluctance to admit that children after a hard day at school have just as much right to be entertained as adults have. Pity the child whose every waking hour must be filed with educational activity. The work ethic now reinvested with Blairite zeal has filtered down to our children who are never allowed to be bored or idle or any of those states that might encourage something truly creative to enter their minds.

My kids have watched a lot of TV without me being present. So that means they are either terribly delinquent or terribly average

The category of separate programming for children needs itself to be questioned. Who watches *Hollyoaks*, *The Big Breakfast*, *EastEnders*, *Casualty* and *Top of the Pops* if not children and teenagers? Zoo TV, that late-Eighties trend, was born out of the arranged marriage of Saturday morning kids' programmes and a generation of presenters like Chris Evans and Johnny Vaughan who instinctively understood how television worked long before they ever worked in the medium itself.

These princes of media literacy may be currently lauded – they are ironic and self-referential in their constant emphasis on the process of production itself. Now they stand out. Surely though, the coming generation will be so media literate that they will eat these guys for breakfast. "Media literacy" is what much of the debate is currently about, but we get it all the wrong way round. It isn't children who need to be taught media literacy: it's their anxious parents and teachers. Even the concept of Media Studies makes people nervous. The study of literature is still regarded as far more useful than the study of anything that emanates from a screen. Despite Brit Art and Brit design, we still place our trust in words rather than pictures, a residue of our profoundly puritanical and anti-visual culture. The message of those concerned with the medium must be that media literacy is not the enemy of good old fashioned literacy.

If we cannot live in a world where we get information and entertainment both on the page and on the screen, we will not get very far at all. Likewise if we always see one medium as infinitely superior to the other then we will loose out. Anyway, even if your virtual teenager has turned into a virtual nerd stuck in their virtual bedroom cruising the Net all night long, he or she is reading and maybe even writing.

I am not denying that there are genuine problems around children and the screen: the spectre of the global child who has no sense of locality or community has been conjured up. This is the child viewed purely as a consumer to be targeted by huge corporations. The mediated child also gets little exercise or direct experience of the complicated world that flickers before him or her and will have a different relationship to it than those who spend a mythical childhood climbing up apple trees.

The overriding concern continues to be censorship. Most parents act as censors of their children's viewing until the child reaches an age where regulation is no longer possible. Inevitably greater access – TV sets in every kid's bedroom – means that parents demand more regulation from broadcasters. We have lost control over what our kids see because new technologies are outstripping our ability to censor them.

Perhaps then we should approach all this the other way round. If our children are seeing far too much, much too young we should make more of an effort to engage with what they do want to watch even when we forbid them to watch it. This is the opposite of dumbing down. It means entering into some form of critical discussion of the material available to them. When you listen to what they say, they are rarely duped and rather sensible about what they value and what they don't. When I used to watch with mother I got *Andy Pandy*. When my kids watch with mother they get *The Simpsons*. If that counts as dumbing down I'll eat my shorts.

Why America's teenage girls can't get enough of 'Titanic'

MARY DEJEVSKY

The boat may sink, but a new feminist role model has risen on the silver screen

AS AWARD after award speeds towards James Cameron for his epic blockbuster and Oscar-favourite, *Titanic*, a handful of critics are professing surprise. Not because of the scale of its success, nor because of the records it notches up week after week for takings and audiences. Nor yet because of the contrast between the dire warnings of failure and the glorious reality.

Almost three months after the film's release, the surprise comes from the complexion of the audiences. In front of cinemas across America, the winding queues comprise not laggardly first-time viewers curious to see if what everyone else says about the film is true, but second, third, fourth and fifth-timers, the vast majority of them teenage girls.

Now the easy explanation is that they have come for the sole purpose of drooling over the gorgeous looks and eerily natural charm of Leonardo DiCaprio, who plays Jack, the doomed hero from the lower orders. In other words, feminism – in terms of self-assertion – is dead; long live romance.

Having belatedly joined the titanic queues myself, I would like to venture that the explanation is more complicated, and perhaps more heartening for those of us on the distaff side in the late Nineties. My bet, borne out subsequently by some gentle inquiry, is that all these girls are not frequenting the cinema only, or even mainly, for the sake of the luscious Leonardo. They are there quite as much for the leading lady, the lonely, stubborn Rose, torn between duty to family, class and convention, and her contempt for the whole charade.

Rose (played by Oscar-nominee Kate Winslet), with her mixture of self-doubt and forwardness, sense of responsibility and lust to break free, holds a particular appeal for America's young women, so many of whom find themselves stranded between aggressive self-assertion and wistful longing for romance. Rose is even a little more plump than your average American girl would like to be, but she seems comfortable with her body – another consoling thought for angst-ridden dieters for whom Barbie was the model.

The director, James Cameron, describes Rose as "muscle plus striking femininity". Her women fans are less abstract about it. "She was a daredevil. She went on to have adventures; she didn't waste her life," says Karen Schoemer in *Time* magazine. "She's so romantic, so *real*," says a young friend who recently saw the film for the sixth time. For America's teenage girls, Rose is the next century's woman in the making.

Something similar goes for the developing relationship between Jack and Rose. By turns conspiratorial and reckless, respectful and teasing, sexual (but always equal), it offers a fully acceptable road map in girl-boy relations to emotionally confused and sexually hung-up Americans. And Jack is the ideal partner: encouraging adventure and self-reliance, displaying leadership and resourcefulness but also restraint and need. His last words to Rose, as he sinks into a watery *Liebestod*: Tell her never to let go, to make something of herself.

Would not every Nineties American girl want a mate like that? A mate who combines chivalry and romance with unforced political correctness and pushes her to make the best of herself? No wonder the girls are out in force for *Titanic*. It's just a pity that the boys are not there too. They might learn about the sort of companionable devotion their girlfriends will now expect.

IT IS NO SECRET that Lord Archer wants to be the mayor of London. Perhaps nobody in British history has ever campaigned more vigorously for a position which, as yet, does not exist. "I'm not a candidate. Yes, I am running," he told Pandora yesterday. There won't be any candidates until after the 7 May referendum tells us whether Londoners do or do not want to have an elected mayor.

Of course the polls show that a majority of Londoners will vote in favour of having a mayor. In the meantime, Archer's effort is entirely made up of volunteers, he says, including his new treasurer, wealthy businessman Greg Hutchings. "I haven't spent a penny," Archer assured me. "And I have written to Lord Neill, the Commissioner for Public Standards, to clarify this question of campaign expenses. He wrote back confirming that you can't be running until you're running." These somewhat torturous linguistic qualifications are absolutely necessary, for Archer is aware that he has enemies in Parliament who do not look fondly upon the prospect of him becoming London's mayor. Yesterday a parliamentary tongue wagged near Pandora's ear about a possible "snag" in Archer's plans.

At some point the Government, if there is going to be a mayoral election, will need to establish guidelines for candidates, including a limit on funds spent. (Prospective MPs are not allowed to spend more than £10,000 in contesting a general election. That's hardly a round of drinks to someone in Archer's financial league.) As with parliamentary elections, it is expected that these mayoral spending limits will apply from the date a person first declares himself a candidate. According to Pandora's sources, some of Archer's opponents, reading of his "campaign trail" in the *Telegraph* on Saturday, licked their lips at the prospect of setting low spending limits that might have been exceeded by Archer long before the actual election in 1999 or 2000 came to pass. If they could prove something like that, they could move to have him disqualified from the race. But according to the master plotter of fictional tales, "We saw through that trap a long time ago." Repeat, he is not a candidate, but he's running.

THE UNIVERSITY of Cambridge has recently announced its set topics for the Sir William Browne Medal for Greek and Latin poems: "Exploring the Internet" (Greek) and "Cloning" (Latin). Pandora is accepting nominations for a new award (the Teletubbies Medal?) for people who make education absurdly relevant to our age.

RUMBLES from the ranks in William Hague's "brand-new" Tory party. The leader has summoned Conservative agents from all over southern England to an all-day conference meeting at glamorous London Docklands Arena. Their mission will be to choose candidates from the region for future Euro elections. The date set for this carousing is the Friday before the summer's first bank holiday. Whose brilliant idea was this? Many of the agents are blaming Archie Norman, the party's new deputy chairman and workaholic boss of Asda. *Just to* make matters worse, in Hague's own constituency of Richmond, the boy leader is soon to introduce his own loyal "new-brand" agent.

PANDORA noticed that barrister Tony Baldry was one of the Tory MPs who successfully filibustered against the anti-hunting Bill last week. In fact, he spoke for an hour. Could this possibly be the same Tony Baldry who, several years ago, successfully defended a woman hunt-saboteur, Caroline Wetton, who was charged with driving her car directly at hare coursers Sir Rupert Mackeson?

Pandora

20/BUSINESS

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

CWC snubs Microsoft with software plans for digital TV internet access

By Peter Thal Larsen and Michael Harrison

The UK's largest cable company yesterday delivered a snub to Microsoft by choosing software backed by Netscape and Oracle to power its new digital television service.

Cable & Wireless Communications, which has 760,000 cable television customers in the UK, will launch its digital service this autumn with software provided by Network Computer Inc, a joint venture between Netscape, best known for its internet browsers, and software group Oracle.

Subscribers will receive a digital set-top box for their television sets, giving them access to 200 channels. But with the NCI software – known as the DTV Navigator – they will also be able to surf the World Wide Web, send and receive e-mail, and eventually play games, make bets and do their shopping online.

Digital cable will be the third form of digital television to become available to viewers this year. Satellite broadcaster BSkyB will start transmitting a 200-channel digital service in June while British Digital Broadcasting, a joint venture between Carlton and Granada, plans to launch 30 channels in the autumn. Both suppliers also plan to offer interactive services.

Graham Wallace, chief executive of CWC, said that customers would have "more control, choice and flexibility in how and when they access a whole range of information and entertainment services – all through their existing TV sets."

Industry analysts welcomed the move. "They're taking cable beyond being just a telephone service like BT or a pay-TV service like Sky," said James Ross, an analyst with ABN Amro. CWC shares closed up 3p at 351p.

The announcement is a setback for Microsoft, which has been attempting to corner the market for set-top box software through WebTV, the software company it took over last year. The UK market is seen as particularly crucial because it is leading the world in the introduction of digital television.

Microsoft has been talking to a number of British broadcasters, including BDB and Flextech, the programme packager, about supplying them with the capability to launch interactive services. Last night, a spokeswoman for WebTV said the company was talking to "a variety of people" but was not ready to make any announcements.

Mr Wallace said: "We've had extensive talks with Microsoft, and they effectively said there was no way they could provide a product for our launch in 1998." He added that CWC had "chosen the best product available" though the company did not "want to be in anybody's pocket".

Mr Wallace said interactive services were the key to increasing use of CWC's existing network. "We have had a high capacity network, and until now have just chugged a few television channels along it." The DTV Navigator will provide CWC's digital customers with access to an electronic programming guide – an advanced form of teletext. From there, they will be able to access interactive services like games and on-demand movies as well as jump to sites on the World Wide Web.

CWC is expected to launch the service this autumn after conducting trials throughout the summer. One advantage will be that, unlike BSkyB and BDB, customers will not have to spend £200 on the set-top box required to receive the service. CWC currently rents boxes to its customers and takes them back if they no longer require the service.

David Roux of Network Computers Inc (left) and Graham Wallace of Cable & Wireless — Photograph: Kristian Buus

Mr Wallace said CWC was considering charging less than £10 a month – the current standard charge – for internet access even though CWC's service will offer connection at 20 times the speed of the most powerful modem available.

Yesterday Greg Clarke, CWC's chief operating officer, said the company was talking to a "long line" of leading companies about providing their services on-line next year.

CWC's service will compete with that provided by BSkyB, which plans to launch its own interactive services through a joint venture with British Telecom, Midland Bank and Matsushita.

The venture, called British Interactive Broadcasting, will provide internet access and a range of services from home shopping and banking to educational, sporting, entertainment and public service information. The launch is subject to approval from regulatory authorities in Brussels.

BIB is in talks with up to 30 content providers including Sainsbury, HMV, Thomas Cook, Great Universal Stores and Dorling Kindersley, the educational publisher.

The four partners in BIB have put up £265m to develop the service and help subsidise the cost of the set-top boxes needed to receive digital satellite services. The set-top box will be connected to an ordinary telephone line which in turn provides access to the internet.

This means that it will take longer to get onto the internet than through CWC's service. But BT is conducting trials with a range of more advanced technologies that provide much greater capacity and quicker access.

Trials with a technology known as ADSL, which compresses signals and makes the traditional copper wire pair work like "a modem on steroids" begin this summer in west London.

At present there are an estimated 1.8 million personal computers linked to the internet. But BT forecasts that within five years there will be 3.5 million set-top boxes and integrated televisions in use providing internet access and 14 million by 2010.

Writs may fly after Grabiner stalks out of United

By Peter Thal Larsen

Stephen Grabiner, the United News & Media executive who has been appointed to run British Digital Broadcasting, the television group, has left United News without working out his contract and may launch legal action against the company.

Mr Grabiner is believed to have cleared his desk earlier this week after becoming increasingly frustrated with the delays in negotiating his departure from the group. He was named as chief executive of BDB, the joint venture between broadcasters Carlton and Granada, at the end of January. At the time United News said Mr Grabiner would work out his 12-month notice period, keeping him at United News until the beginning of 1999 - several months after BDB's planned launch date.

United News and BDB have subsequently been negotiating the release of Mr Grabiner from his contract. Industry analysts believe that Lord Hollick, United's chief executive, hoped to use Mr Grabiner as a bargaining chip to improve his position in the digital television market. United submitted a bid to operate Digital Terrestrial Television, but lost out to BDB.

The deadlock is understood to have frustrated Mr Grabiner, who was poached from Telegraph Group, the newspaper publisher, two years ago to run United's newspaper interests. His responsibilities were also reduced substantially last month when United completed the sale of its regional newspaper division, effectively leaving Mr Grabiner in charge of little more than the *Express* titles and the *Daily Star*.

Mr Grabiner is understood to be considering using the disposal as grounds for legal action. One industry source said: "You might think that having three-quarters of the profits sold from under you is akin to constructive dismissal. They certainly have not offered him a position of equivalent status."

It is unclear whether Mr Grabiner is preparing to take up his post at BDB ahead of schedule. The broadcaster, which is planning the nationwide launch of its 30-channel service in the autumn, is currently being run by Nigel Warmsley, a Carlton executive.

Mr Grabiner could not be reached for comment last night. A spokesman for United said the company had nothing new to add.

Midshires wavers as board considers £780m Halifax bid

By Lea Paterson

THE BOARD of Birmingham Midshires met last night to give "preliminary consideration" to Halifax's attempt to prise the building society away from the grip of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The Midshires directors are expected to decide whether to break a legal agreement signed by both themselves and the Royal Bank of Scotland last August.

Under terms of that agreement, Midshires is not allowed to hold formal talks, or exchange information with, a third party. The most likely outcome is that Midshires will ask Royal Bank to release it from parts of the agreement, rather than break the contract, a source close to the discussions said.

It is believed that, if Midshires broke the contract, it could be hit by a penalty fee.

A Midshires spokesperson said the board would not immediately decide whether to recommend the Halifax bid to its members over the Royal Bank bid.

The Royal Bank agreed in August to pay a price of between £605m and £630m for Birmingham Midshires. On Monday evening Halifax launched a £780m rival bid, saying that Royal Bank "significantly undervalued" the building society. The Royal Bank has said it will not raise its offer "under any circumstances". Halifax said that because of the agreement between the Royal Bank and Birmingham Midshires, its offer had necessarily been based on publicly available information.

David Gilchrist, Halifax's group secretary, hinted his company could walk away from the deal if it could not talk through details of the offer with Midshires. He said: "They [Midshires] would have to be released from this sort of restriction for this to proceed in any sensible way".

However, the Royal Bank gave the impression of standing firm on the legal agreement between itself and Midshires. In a statement released yesterday morning, the bank said it had a "binding agreement" with Midshires. It added: "Royal Bank Group and Birmingham Midshires continue to work together towards submitting the Royal Bank Group's proposals to Birmingham Midshires' members as soon as possible".

Peter George: Purchase of Coral was unconditional

Ladbroke referral to the MMC looks like a sure bet

By Andrew Yates

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, is poised to refer Ladbroke's £362.7m acquisition of the Coral betting chain to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission over fears it will give the group a monopoly in the betting industry.

A referral could be announced this week after an preliminary investigation of the deal by the Office of Fair Trading. The Government could force Ladbroke to divest of hundreds of betting shops to overcome competition concerns or could require it to sell the whole of the 833-strong Coral estate. Ladbroke, led by Peter George, controls 2,600 betting shops, or 35 per cent of the total UK market after signing an unconditional deal to buy 833 Coral shops from Bass on New Year's Eve. It had hoped to avoid an MMC inquiry by selling 133 of its betting shops to the Tote. Ladbroke claims disposal of these sites means it conforms to the "quarter-mile rule" laid down by the MMC when Mecca merged with William Hill in 1989.

This stipulated that a bookmaker could not have more than one shop within a 440 yard radius of another branch and was aimed at ensuring no one was able to establish a local monopoly. Until a few weeks ago, Ladbroke was confident this would be enough to avert an MMC inquiry. But sources suggest the group is resigned to the fact that its betting business will face months of uncertainty as a full-scale investigation gets under way. The acquisition has raised concerns among senior cabinet ministers. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary and a horse-racing fan, has publicly voiced worries about the deal and Alan Meale, another Labour MP, has led the attack against the acquisition. One source said: "A referral now seems inevitable. Political pressure is growing for an MMC referral which is likely to lead to more divestments."

The Coral purchase has also caused an outcry from rivals in the industry, including William Hill, now owned by Nomura, the Japanese bank. Analysts believe there would be no shortage of buyers for any shops that Ladbroke is forced to sell. The Tote is known to be keen to expand its estate, as is Stanley Leisure, currently the third biggest player in the market, and William Hill.

Poor pay dearly for tobacco addiction and cough up out of all proportion on duty

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Higher tobacco duty falls more heavily on the poor because the richest third of the population has more or less given up smoking, while the bottom fifth are puffing away as heavily as ever, according to a report funded by the cigarette lobby.

The Fair Cigarette Tax Campaign, the lobby group financially supported by tobacco manufacturers, will use the claims as ammunition against further increases in duty.

The reports also claims the increases in real terms - started by the Conservatives and continued by the present government - are boosting illegal imports from abroad, at a cost in lost tax receipts of £690m a year.

The findings, based on research by London Economics, a consultancy firm, suggest high tobacco taxes redistribute the burden from the rich to the poor. The duty paid by the top 30 per cent of the income distribution has fallen since 1993, even though rates of duty have climbed. The amount paid by the 20 per cent at the bottom has increased over the same period, and these households spend more every week on tobacco and tobacco tax than better-off households.

The poorest tenth of the population spend just under 14 per cent of their income on tobacco tax, compared to less than half a per cent for the richest tenth.

The pattern of spending means that every increase in the duty makes it an ever more regressive tax, penalising the poor more than the rich.

The report was financed by Philip Morris.

Wetherspoon rues its TV-free ambience as World Cup fever threatens to drive punters to other pubs

By Andrew Yates

The World Cup football championship in France this summer promises to provide a bonanza for the betting and leisure industry – but there is one person who will not be cheering.

Tim Martin, chairman of JD Wetherspoon, the pub chain that has banned TV screens and music from its pubs, yesterday admitted the feast of football will cost the group dear, with drinkers switching to rival hostelries who are willing to show the games. "If Gazza breaks into tears again our sales will suffer. In 1990 sales dipped by 10 per cent a week during the World Cup. This time it could be worse and it will have an effect on second half profits," he said yesterday. Mr Martin also admitted the group had fallen foul of the Trading Standards Office.

Wetherspoon has spend £700,000 introducing new glasses marked with a line indicating a pint measure. The pub chain started an advertising campaign with the slogan "We offer 5 per cent more beer here." However the posters incurred the wrath of trading standards offices, who questioned the group's claims. In the end the they had to be torn down.

Wetherspoon plans to open 50 pubs in the next six months, including what it claimed would be the first new purpose-built site in central Newcastle since Roman times. It is on track to have 500 outlets by 2001 after one of the fastest expansion programmes the pub industry has ever seen.

However it has shelved plans to take the chain overseas and open pubs in Paris.

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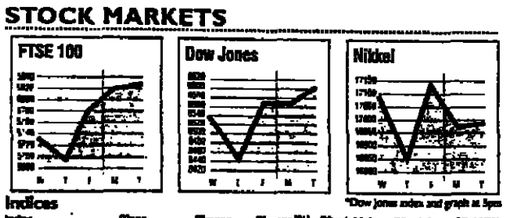
STOCK MARKETS

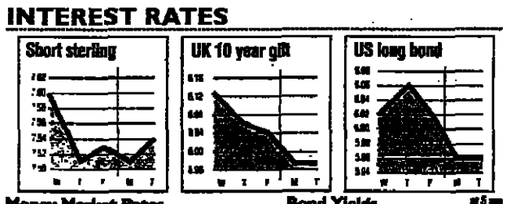


*Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm

Indices

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5807.70	-12.90	-0.22	5846.90	4183.10	3.16
FTSE 250	5281.40	26.80	0.51	5254.60	4384.20	2.97
FTSE 350	2780.00	-2.40	-0.09	2792.20	2075.70	3.13
FTSE All Share	2705.97	-1.84	-0.07	2716.68	2056.07	3.11
FTSE SmallCap	2484.70	5.50	0.22	2479.30	2182.10	2.80
FTSE Fledgling	1360.30	1.50	0.11	1358.80	1225.20	3.16
FTSE AIM	1014.70	4.40	0.44	1136.50	965.90	0.99
Dow Jones	8584.83	34.38	0.40	8566.69	6356.78	1.62
Nikkei	17168.33	-96.01	-0.56	20910.79	14468.21	0.89
Hang Seng	11425.46	106.62	0.94	16820.31	7909.13	3.44
Dax	4757.14	20.40	0.43	4745.20	3192.33	1.60

INTEREST RATES



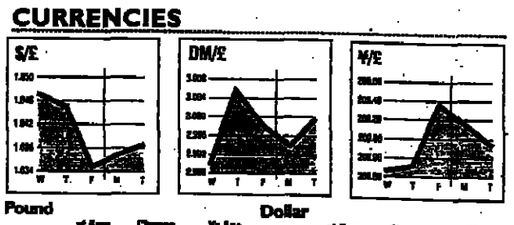
Money Market Rates / **Bond Yields** (at 5 pm)

Index	3 month	1 yr chg	1 year	1 yr chg	10 year	1 yr chg	Long bond	1 yr chg
UK	7.56	1.31	7.57	0.84	6.10	-1.13	6.03	-1.37
US	5.69	0.14	5.81	-0.19	5.77	-0.80	6.07	-0.76
Japan	0.78	0.27	0.73	0.16	1.88	-0.71	2.52	-0.70
Germany	3.51	0.26	3.76	0.46	4.98	-0.57	5.55	-0.79

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chge	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chge
Safeway	385.00	24.25	6.72	Blue Circle	370.00	-24.00	-6.09
GKN	1535.00	66.00	4.49	Nat Power	587.00	-31.00	-5.02
EMI Group	540.00	22.00	4.25	Powergen	803.00	-29.00	-3.49
Energy Group	836.00	32.00	3.97	Norwich Union	505	-18	-3.44

CURRENCIES



Pound

	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6525	+0.50c	1.6178
D-Mark	2.9879	+0.21pf	2.7441
Yen	208.30	+¥1.82	196.06
£ Index	105.10	+0.00	98.50

Dollar

	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Sterling	0.6051	-0.18p	0.6182
D-Mark	1.8093	-0.39pf	1.6969
Yen	126.08	+¥0.66	121.26
$ Index	108.10	+0.00	103.50

OTHER INDICATORS

* at 5 pm	Close	Chg	Yr Ago
Brent Oil ($)	13.09	-0.26	19.17
Gold ($)	297.85	-1.65	361.80
Silver ($)	6.50	-0.11	5.31

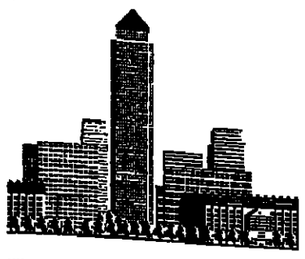
	Index	Chg	Yr ago	Next figs
GDP	114.30	3.00	110.97	Feb
RPI	159.50	3.30	154.40	Feb
Base Rates		7.25	6.00	

www.bloomberg.com/uk — source: Bloomberg

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3577	Italy (lira)	2.867
Austria (schillings)	20.37	Japan (yen)	205.82
Belgium (francs)	59.83	Malta (lira)	0.6293
Canada ($)	2.2485	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2663
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8454	Norway (kroner)	12.12
Denmark (kroner)	11.12	Portugal (escudos)	294.47
Finland (markka)	8.8677	Spain (pesetas)	245.11
France (francs)	9.7244	South Africa (rand)	7.8000
Germany (marks)	2.9090	Sweden (kroner)	12.78
Greece (drachmas)	459.79	Switzerland (francs)	2.3725
Hong Kong ($)	12.27	Turkey (lira)	369,367
Ireland (punts)	1.1642	USA ($)	1.5964

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only



OUTLOOK

The hidden costs of pensions mismanagement

Almost everyday brings another shocker of a revelation about the previous government's privatisation programme, it seems. Last week we learned that no proper valuation was done ahead of the sale of the rolling stock leasing companies, with the result that the public purse was seriously short changed. Today we are told that the Government's privatisation of the water authorities in the late 1980s has left the taxpayer with a hidden £420m pensions liability. Whatever next?

Both these disclosures are made by the National Audit Office, the Government's financial watchdog. Its report on water privatisation makes particularly fascinating reading, if only because the NAO itself in the immediate aftermath of the water flotations said a fair price had been realised under the circumstances and everything was generally hunky dory. In the murky world of the public finances, it transpires, nothing is ever that simple; it now appears the taxpayer was ripped off after all.

The story bears some repeating. Prior to privatisation, the water industry ran a collective pension scheme which because it was largely unfunded was showing a hefty deficit. Since the water companies couldn't be privatised with unfunded pension liabilities, it was decided to break up the fund into fully funded water company schemes and a closed fund that would be left in the public sector to meet the liabilities of existing pensioners. So far, so good.

The problem arose on the division of assets. What happened was that the water companies took all the decent assets - largely equities and cash - for themselves, leaving the public sector fund with a lot of dodgy property and underperforming equities. If this had been done deliberately by the Government it might have seemed bad enough, but in fact it was done by a process of subterfuge. The company that divided up the assets, Queen Anne's Gate Asset Management, was owned by the water companies themselves.

The upshot was that a public sector liability of less than £100m at the time of transfer was with dispatch turned into a much larger one when the bottom dropped out of the property market in the early 1990s. This was compounded further by very poor management of the fund. The end result is that by 2005 the public sector part of what remains of the water industry pension scheme will have run out of assets but will still have £420m of liabilities to meet.

All this may seem of little more than academic interest so long after the event. We kind of already knew, or at least suspected, that the way these privatisations were accounted for in the public finances was a fiddle. But plainly there are lessons here too. The public sector has responsibility for managing pension funds with liabilities of well over £100bn. If the mismanagement of water industry pension assets is anything to go by, there could be an awfully large pensions tab in the making for future generations to pick up.

By mid summer, the Financial Services Authority will be largely up and running. Five of the nine organisations it will eventually encompass will have moved in together at the FSA's new London docklands headquarters in Canary Wharf, and to all intents and purposes the FSA is already operating as a single regulator for the City and financial services industry.

All of which may seem rather odd given that the legislation that brings the FSA into existence and gives it powers won't by published until the Autumn and is unlikely to receive the Royal Assent until the following summer. Is this not putting the cart just a little bit before the horse? The Commons Treasury Select Committee is beginning to think it might be and has belatedly decided it ought to be monitoring the progress of this at present almost wholly unaccountable beast.

Parliament is one thing. The advent of the FSA seems to be going largely unheeded in the City too. What with all those sackings, restructurings and mergers, not to mention having to deal with the millennium bug and preparing for the Euro, City folk may have more important matters on their hands. Howard Davies, chairman of the FSA, is meticulous about consulting on all the FSA's initiatives. But if the City doesn't bother to make its voice heard, it will only have itself to blame if Mr Davies fails to get the structure right.

When Ladbroke bought the Coral betting shop business from Bass at the start of the year, it was effectively betting that the deal would not be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. So confident was Ladbroke's chief executive Peter George that the deal would escape regulatory scrutiny that he agreed to make the purchase unconditional and duly handed over £363m of the folding stuff to the vendors.

As an each way bet, however, Mr George also agreed to dispose of 133 of Coral's shops to the Tote, so that the deal conformed with the "quarter mile rule" - the requirement that no single company should own more than one betting shop within a 440 yard radius. The rule was established in 1989 when William Hill merged with Mecca to become number two in the market.

Even after the Tote deal, however, Ladbroke plus Coral still dwarfs other players in the industry with an estate of some 2,600 shops and a market share of around 35 per cent. This is the sort of figure that makes an automatic MMC referral an odds on favourite.

The Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, a keen race-goer and one-time newspaper tipster, has already intimated that the deal should be examined. With Margaret Beckett as President of the Board of Trade, he is pushing at an open door. Ladbroke could probably offload quite a few more shops to satisfy the MMC and not suffer a loss. But if the MMC orders a large-scale disposal then Ladbroke will be forced into a fire sale, made worse by the fact that William Hill, the other big player, would face much the same regulatory hurdles. When Bass was prevented from acquiring Carlsberg Tetley it at least had a fall-back position that allowed it to sell back the business to Carlsberg and Allied. Mr George has no such escape route. For a bookie, this is turning into quite a gamble.

MCI acts to calm fears over WorldCom deal

MCI, the US telecoms giant, moved to reassure investors its $37bn (£22bn) acquisition by WorldCom was still on track despite reports of competition concerns at the US Justice Department. Regulators have widened their probe into the deal, with particular regard to the Internet. The European Commission is also investigating the proposed deal . MCI said it still expected the deal to go through by the middle of the year. WorldCom made its bid after a 1996 offer for MCI by British Telecom went sour last year when BT lowered its offer.

Crédit Lyonnais staff sue

Staff at Crédit Lyonnais, the French bank, are taking their employer to court to force it to reveal details of restructuring proposals. It has made proposals to the European Commission in return for authorisation of additional state aid. A representative of the staff union said it was "unacceptable" Crédit Lyonnais employees had been unable to obtain copies of the proposals.

Independent Insurance surge

Shares in Independent Insurance Group surged by 10 per cent after it unveiled better than expected first-half results. Operating pre-tax profits rose by 38 per cent to £58.3m in the year to December. Shares closed at 1395p, up 140p.

Kingfisher looks east

Kingfisher, the retail group that includes B&Q, Woolworths, Comet and Superdrug, opened its Asian head office in Hong Kong and said it was looking for acquisition opportunities in the region. Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive, said: "The Asian financial crisis hasn't changed our faith in this particular place."

Transworld drops takeover

Transworld HealthCare has called off talks on a possible takeover of Healthcall Group, the UK healthcare-services provider. The healthcare provider, which last week said it was considering a £58.5m bid, said it had "no present intention" to make a bid. The offer would have been worth 105p a share. Healthcall shares fell 12p to 87.5p. Transworld's decision leaves HCMS, a company set up by Healthcall's management to acquire the company, as the only bidder.

Williams sheds NuTone

Williams, the fire protection and security group, signalled its retreat from home-improvement services with the $242m (£148m) sale of its NuTone subsidiary. The American door chimes to bathroom cabinets business has gone to US building products group Nortek. Further disposals from the home improvement division are being lined up by Williams. Strong organic growth and the speedy integration of the huge Chubb acquisition sent shares up 22p to end at 410p.

Investment Column, page 22

DTI bearing down

The Department of Trade and Industry said it would refer the proposed acquisition of T&N by Federal-Mogul Corp of the US to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission unless it was given suitable undertakings to allay competition concerns. Nigel Griffiths, competition and consumer affairs minister, said the merger gave rise to competition concerns in relation to "thinwall" engine bearings. He is seeking undertakings from Federal-Mogul that it will sell all T&N's European thinwall bearings business.

LME tackles market abuse

The London Metal Exchange issued a consultation document detailing steps already taken on greater transparency, and seeking views on solutions to market abuse. The LME set out various possible measures for tackling issue of how to intervene when there is possible market manipulation and abuse, which it classifies as market aberrations. The LME asked for views on market aberrations in October 1997 after a review by the Securities and Investments Board following the £1.6bn Sumitomo Corp copper scandal.

London lures media group

Scottish Media Group, which owns the *Glasgow Herald* and controls two Scottish ITV franchises, is looking to increase its presence in London. The company, which recently sold its 18 per cent stake in Ulster Television after failing to get the ITV group's approval for a 240p a share bid, said it was looking at a wide range of potential deals.

Profits of doom

The flotation of Guardian iT, which helps rescue damaged computers and keep systems running after a disaster, has attracted City interest. The company yesterday said it had raised £44.4m through a placing and employee offer which values the company at £130.5m.Guardian, which was bought out from computer giant ICL by its management for £21m in 1995, provides standby computers and alternative workplaces to companies who have suffered a disaster.

PIA attacks 614 firms for mis-selling transgression

By Lea Paterson

THE WATCHDOG for the personal investment industry yesterday said he was "very disappointed" that 614 firms had appeared to fail to meet the December pensions mis-selling deadline.

Joe Palmer, chairman of the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), yesterday said the companies accounted for 4,604 cases – 2 per cent of all the most urgent cases.

The PIA required the firms it regulates to complete 90 per cent of their most urgent pension mis-selling cases – "priority one" cases – by the end of last year.

Most of the 614 firms, all independent financial advisers, appeared to have completed less than 30 per cent of their priority one cases, Mr Palmer said.

"Although they account for a relatively small number of cases, each and every investor deserves a quick and efficient conclusion to their case and should not be let down in this way," he said.

The PIA said it was investigating the apparent failures "with a view to commencing disciplinary action". The disciplinary action is expected to take the form of fines.

The news came as Norwich Union, the insurance group, said it was on track to complete virtually all 6,000 of its priority mis-selling cases by the end of April, in line with its regulatory target.

Norwich Union is among the companies unlikely to face PIA action. Richard Harvey, Norwich's chief executive, said: "We are confident we can achieve results which are satisfactory to the PIA".

The insurer yesterday also delivered a strong set of full year figures, its first since flotation in June.

On a like-for-like base, operating profit before tax rose 11 per cent to £627m. The results – which were roughly line with City expectations – had little impact upon the shares, which closed 5p down on the day at 510p.

One analyst commented: "It was a solid set of figures. The results were very close to what we expected."

Norwich is to seek authority at its annual general meeting to buy back up to 10 per cent of its shares. However, Mr Harvey said the insurer had "no intention in the imminent future" of using this authority. He added it was simply "an option every company should have".

Mr Harvey declined to comment on whether Norwich, which is widely seen by sector watchers as a candidate for takeover, had received approaches from potential acquirers.

The Norwich chief said: "It would be inappropriate to comment on rumours. As far as acquisitions go, we've always been absolutely clear that Norwich Union regards itself as a positive acquirer who could play a useful role in consolidation." Norwich said it had sufficient spare capital to make smaller acquisitions.

Norwich announced a dividend per share of 7.75p. Its investors have seen their shares increase by about 50 per cent in value since the company converted last summer at a cost. Two key factors driving the share price rise are hopes of merger activity and the fact that many institutions are underweight in Norwich Union. More than 50 per cent of the company's shares are currently held by individuals.

Waterford Wedgwood, the Irish luxury crystal and china group, yesterday unveiled a 15-per-cent rise in pre-tax profits for 1997. Brian Patterson, chief executive of Wedgwood (left) and Redmond O'Donoghue, chief executive of Waterford, said this year would see consolidation in the china business but forecast another year of record crystal sales. Tony O'Reilly, group chairman, said: "We are confident that our sharpened focus, and our scale as the biggest premium crystal and ceramics player, will lead to expanded growth opportunities and increasing earnings momentum." The group made £40.0m Irish pounds, excluding a one-time restructuring charge of £27.8m in its ceramics division. The figure was in line with analysts' forecasts of £39.5m-£40.8m and was up from £34.9m in 1996. The one-time charge arose from restructuring and consolidating the Wedgwood china brand and the company's recently bought 82.62 per cent stake in German porcelain firm Rosenthal. 'During the early months of the year, both Wedgwood and Rosenthal will continue with heavy investment,' Dr O'Reilly said.

Connex set to slam door on ancient carriages

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Connex South Central, the French-owned company which runs commuter services in London, said yesterday it would make "a significant investment" in rolling stock as part of plans to lengthen its franchise.

Connex is unique among rail companies in having an option to extend the franchise written into its original contract with the Government. Geoff Harrison Mee, the company's managing director, said Connex's 300 four-carriage ancient "slam door" rolling stock could be completely replaced as part of the deal.

Mr Harrison Mee made his comments at the unveiling of a train, the Adtranz Classic. This uses an old-style slam-door carriage frame to which a more crash-resistant top has been added and would only cost half the price of a new train.

Adtranz also say that the Classic can be in service about nine months after being ordered - vital for those operators looking to replace slam-door carriages. One problem for prospective buyers, identified by Mr Harrison Mee, is the lack of air-conditioning on the new Classic. "It would certainly not be able to replace all our stock," he added.

But there are some obvious advantages. For train companies worried about overcrowding, the new trains can offer up to 30 per cent more seats than older stock. Connex has a good track record in investing in rolling stock. Last year Adtranz supplied 30 new trains to Connex for £150m.

"It is time the railway industry was able to demonstrate not only its commitment to providing high-quality services for customers, but also its commitment to good quality design and safe products," said Labour MP Gwyneth Dunwoody, whose constituency of Crewe and Nantwich is home to one of Adtranz's plants. Mrs Dunwoody, chairwoman of the House of Commons Transport Committee, added: "People deserve good quality railways and to be able to travel in speed, comfort and safety."

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
William Baird (F)	596.4m (667.2m)	33.4m (-6.1m)	19.4p (-6.5p)	10.3p (9.35p)
BSA Group (F)	1.19bn (1.10bn)	154.3m (141.1m)	23.7p (20.6p)	8.0p (7.0p)
BPP (F)	79.99m (75.54m)	9.04m (9.7m)	17.0p (22.9p)	16.0p (13.0p)
Brent Int (F)	134.0m (140.1m)	9.31m (10.20m)	8.8p (9.1p)	3.5p
Cortecs (I)	9.1m (4.3m)	-9.1m (-4.3m)	-5.9p (-4.3p)	
CRC (F)	12.7m (10.57m)	0.932m (0.974m)	5.72p (5.91p)	
DRS Data & Research (F)	6.76m (4.62m)	-0.826m (-1.73m)	-1.99p (-3.43p)	nil
Independent Insurance (F)	- (-)	65.0m (52.8m)	99.9p (80.2p)	16.5p (13.25p)
JD Wetherspoon (I)	89.03m (84.97m)	11.06m (9.12m)	5.5p (4.1p)	0.75p (0.68p)
Kalon Group (F)	472.1m (524.8m)	45.16m (19.32m)	7.4p (3.14p)	8.2p
Keller Group (F)	241.1m (234.7m)	13.8m (12.5m)	15.9p (13.9p)	6.46p
Lambert Howarth (F)	109.5m (98.7m)	4.59m (2.21m)	21.0p (11.8p)	8.5p (7.5p)
Norwich Union (F)	- (-)	722.0m (626.0m)	25.2p (18.9p)	11.6p (10.5p)
Provost Group (I)	31.0m (28.0m)	1.27m (0.181m)	5.5p (1.4p)	1.25p
Prime People (F)	- (-)	0.344m (0.127m)	0.94p (0.33p)	
PSG Group (F)	32.2m (19.26m)	2.13m (4.54m)	28.0p (18.3p)	8.4p
Quelcomm (F)	R8.8m (7.3m)	R1.76m (1.54m)	11.88p (10.8p)	3.0p
Redrow (I)	148.5m (128.3m)	23.2m (16.4m)	7.3p (5.2p)	1.38p (1.2p)
Richardson/Westgarth (F)	126.5m (117.4m)	6.1m (3.6m)	11.3p (10.1p)	4.5p (4.1p)
Scottish Media (F)	197.0m (127.3m)	41.0m (26.0m)	48.4p (31.0p)	22.5p (18.7p)
SGB Group (F)	304.5m (251.8m)	16.9m (13.4m)	15.6p (12.3p)	3.5p
Spectec (F)	101.3m (98.5m)	9.0m (9.9m)	17.3p (19.5p)	2.7p
Thorntons (I)	80.3m (85.5m)	11.48m (9.94m)	11.7p (11.55p)	1.8p (1.65p)
United Carriers (F)	133.8m (138.0m)	2.187m (2.07m)	5.7p (5.3p)	3.5p (3.4p)
Waterford Wedgwood (F)	R417m (375m)	R12.2m (34.9m)	0.88p (4.0p)	1.8p (1.4p)
Williams (F)	2.23bn (1.82bn)	254.0m (240.2m)	19.8p (39.1p)	15.8p (15.1p)
WSH Group (F)	49.86m (28.13m)	3.26m (2.3m)	7.3p (5.4p)	2.8p (2.4p)
Wyevale Garden (F)	63.0m (54.7m)	9.12m (7.99m)	15.0p (13.8p)	6.88p (6.12p)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim

Premier shifting focus from oil to gas

By Terry Macalister

Premier Oil yesterday outlined a new strategy to transform itself from a North Sea oil company to an Asian gas group, despite the economic turmoil in emerging markets. Charles Jamieson, chief executive, said that by the turn of the century his company would have 70 per cent of its production coming from gas rather than oil.

Currently Premier has 85 per cent of production in oil and 15 per cent in gas. Mr Jamieson dismissed worries about the economic strength of the area, saying this should not affect the kind of gas business Premier intended to concentrate on.

Alan Marshall, energy analyst at Robert Fleming, supported the new strategy, despite the uncertainty in South-East Asia. But other industry watchers were sceptical, and Premier's shares fell 3.5p on the day to 40.5p.

Mr Jamieson said much of the new focus towards Asia was already under way as Premier put increased resources into Indonesia, Burma and Pakistan. Last year Premier made four significant discoveries and took over as operator of the Anoa field in Indonesia. The exploration and production company also took over as operator of the Yetagun field in Burma and signed a strategic alliance with Petronas, the Malaysian state oil company.

Mr Jamieson unveiled the new gas focus after reporting a small but better than expected increase in pre-tax profits, from £68.5m to £71.1m in the 12 months to 31 December.

Turnover rose from £138.8m to £166.2m but the company was hit by lower oil prices, particularly in the last quarter of the year. To mitigate the effects of the current oil price of below $14 (£8.50) per barrel, Premier has hedged 25 per cent of its production at $18 per barrel during the first half of the year.

Cash flow rose 45 per cent to £90.5m and the dividend was hiked 10 per cent to 0.6p per share.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Upbeat Williams calms the City

ALARM bells finally stopped ringing yesterday at Williams, the fire protection and security group. Bears had been worried about problems inside Chubb, which was acquired by Williams for a steep price tag of £1.3bn last year.

Critics were also raised concerns about Williams exposure to trading woes in South-east Asia. This had helped to depress the share price but upbeat results yesterday brought out the bulls.

Williams said Chubb was on line to deliver £40m of performance improvement benefits by the end of this year while the tiger economies accounted for only 4 per cent of its sales. Williams' stock rose another 22p to 410p yesterday after a similar rise the day before.

The positive response from the City was also generated by better than expected group profits plus confirmation, finally, that the home improvements division was up for sale.

Demonstrating this further commitment to further focus activities, Williams announced details of a $242.5 (£148m) cash disposal of its US door chimes and bathroom cabinets business. Analysts say Williams could raise another £800m hiving off its home improvement division which takes in household names like Polyfilla, Polycell and Hammerite. The group insists there will be no rush, pointing out that sales from this division have been increasing on the back of strong demand in the US and expansion into Eastern Europe. But there is no interest in second division activities. Future strategy is to concentrate on fire and security where Williams can claim to be global market leaders.

Group pre-tax profits fell from £340.2m to £254.m but analysts had their eyes on underlying earnings. This showed a rise from £248.5m to £285.1m in 1997, higher than many had predicted.

Turnover increased from £1.8bn to £2.2bn while the dividend was increased 5 per cent to 15.8p. Management said the bigger pay out was justified by confidence in the growth prospects for the group which has already seen sales rising strongly in the first months of 1998.

Roger Carr, the chief executive, said the proceeds of forthcoming disposals will be used in the interests of shareholder value. That could mean acquisitions, but more likely share buybacks. Williams hinted at the possibility of buying back at least 10 per cent of its shares.

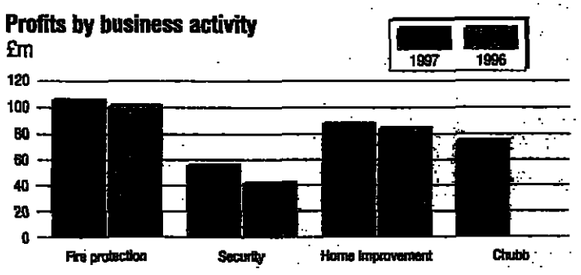
Analysts at Panmure Gordon expect Williams to produce a pre-tax profit of £340m this year putting it on a forward multiple of16 times. Compared with blue-chip rivals in the support services sector, Williams looks extremely cheap, but then the former conglomerate still has something to prove. Hold.

Williams: At a glance

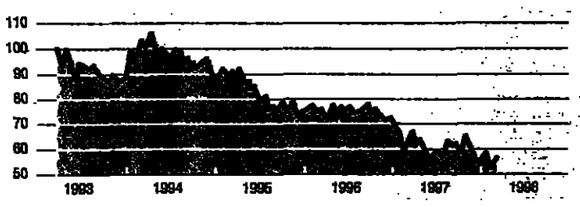
Market value: £3.2bn, share price 410p (+22p)

Five year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.8	2.2
Pre-tax profits (£m)	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Earnings per share (p)	15.4	20.5	22.8	39.1	19.8
Dividends per share (p)	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Profits by business activity



Williams vs the FTSE 100



Source: Datastream

Thorntons sweet after shake-up

INVESTORS in Thorntons, the chocolate retailer and manufacturer, must be delighted with the performance of the company since Roger Paffard took over as chief executive two years ago. The shares have motored from a low of 135p in early 1996 to a new high yesterday of 292.5p, up 5p on the day, after a big shake-up of the group.

Thorntons has been closing smaller underperforming stores and relocating others to larger, more high profile sites. In the six months to 10 January Thorntons accelerated its opening programme with 61 new or re-located stores. The current total of 327 branches is 31 higher than the 296 a year ago and the aim is for 500 stores by 2001.

Sales have been encouraging with the Thorntons non-franchised stores achieving like for like sales growth of 12 per cent. This boosted first half profits to £11.5m, an increase of 15.5 per cent before exceptionals of £11.5m. Current trading shows sales growth in line at 8 per cent. This represents a slowdown which management says was expected as the stores are now up against tough sales comparisons which include the first upgraded outlets of last year.

Thorntons still has more than 100 stores to re-fit or move to better sites so there should still be more room for growth assuming the right sites can be found in a competitive market.

The concern is that the company might be taking on too much. It is also testing five new initiatives but says it will probably only roll out two or three. These include a new coffee shop format, travel locations in railway stations and airports, mail order brochures and more franchise shops. Some of these have already made good progress; there are eight coffee shop formats and a "barrow" style unit at Waterloo station is taking as much as a full size shop. Even so management must be aware of the dangers of spreading itself too thinly.

Assuming full year profits of £12.9m the shares trade on a forward rating of 23. This is quite racy even for a company set to improve earnings by 15 per cent next year. After a good run they look too pricey to chase now.

Wetherspoon dips in growth glitch

Has the JD Wetherspoon bubble burst? A darling of the stock market and the drinks sector its shares have raced away ever since it floated. However, analysts downgraded profits figures at the start of the year after the company indicated that a slowdown in new pub openings and higher costs associated with introducing new lined glasses to give customers a full pint, could affect first-half profits. The result: the shares have underperformed the market by a quarter since January.

Yesterday's first-half figures, showing a 20 per cent rise in underlying pre-tax profits to £9.7m for the six months to February, reassured investors that Wetherspoon's growth had not stalled and its shares rose 15p to 301.5p. But doubts remain. Wetherspoon has proved it is fallible and it will find it increasingly difficult to keep up the same rate of growth it has achieved in the past. The World Cup is bound to hit sales during the summer as football fans flock to pubs with televisions, competition is hotting up as the big pub chains pump billions of pounds into the market and sites are becoming harder to find.

While Wetherspoon should still be able to fund its ambitious expansion programme without issuing more equity, its finances are looking a bit tight and it has been forced to sell pubs and lease them back to buy new sites.

That said Wetherspoon will open 50 new pubs in the second half alone and more than double the size of its estate by 2001. Margin pressure should also be short-lived.

Panmure Gordon forecasts current year profits of £22.9m rising to £32.8m in the following year putting the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 28 then 21. The shares deserve their premium rating. Hold.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK

IS IT a bird?
Is it a plane?
No, it's – Bug Woman!

Gwynneth Flower has won the coveted post of full-time Director of Action 2000, after beating off hundreds of rival applicants to head up the DTI-funded initiative to tackle the Millennium Bug problem.

Ms Flower, an electrical engineer by training, has been picked by the Chairman of Action 2000, Don Cruickshank, the current director general of Oftel, the telecoms regulator.

Our heroine will receive a salary of £100,000 as she leads the fight against the date change problem, the result of the inability of computers to tell the difference between the year "2000" and "1900".

Mr Cruickshank welcomed her on board yesterday saying: "Gwynneth Flower has a wide range of professional experience – as an eminent electrical engineer, public administrator and communicator that will add great strength to Action 2000."

The doomsayers in the IT industry insist the existence of the Millennium Bug means that come the year 2000, computers all over the world will go the binary equivalent of bananas, unless they get reprogrammed first.

In response Action 2000 was set by Barbara Roche, Minister for Industry, last October, and the top job aroused intense interest because of the kudos it will bring to the holder throughout the business world. Ms Flower will quite literally be attempting to prevent The End of Civilisation As We Know It.

Ms Flower was, until recently, head of the Central London Training and Enterprise Council (Centec), the biggest such body in the country. She has been a member of loads of worthy bodies, such as the Central London Economic Development Partnership. She started her career at BP in 1979 as manager of communications development, and went on to work for Plessey and GEC Marconi.

She is also a visiting lecturer at the Royal Military College of Science and the Civil Service Staff, College.

Lets hope Bug Woman gets it right, for all our sakes.

THE NATIONWIDE Building Society is girding itself for another assault by carpetbaggers seeking election to its board, as the agm in mid- July hoves into view.

Last year **Michael Hardern**, a self-employed butler and self-proclaimed king of the carpetbaggers, ran for election to the board on a platform of immediate demutualisation and windfall payouts for the Nationwide's 8 million-odd members.

In the event Mr Hardern lost by a margin which would have made even Michael Portillo blush, and Brian Davis, the Society's bespectacled chief executive, was able to declare a famous victory for the forces of mutuality.

This year the Nationwide is facing a much more serious threat. The carpetbaggers' new candidate is **Andrew Muir**, a recruitment consultant from Slough. Mr Muir wants the Nationwide to pay all its members a £500 handout, and he doesn't mind whether it demutualises to do so or merely pays it out of reserves.

A spokesman for the Nationwide acknowledges that they have received Mr Muir's nomination, along with the required 50 signatures from existing Nationwide members.

Help may be at hand, however, in the unlikely form of Mr Hardern. The butler has just decided he's going to run for the Board as well as Mr Muir, thus threatening to split the carpetbagger vote.

Mr Hardern cheerily admits: "I've got a snowball's chance of getting in. Last year I thought I was a dead cert, so it would be lovely to be equally wrong this time around."

Nationwide itself is maintaining radio silence over Mr Hardern's potentially beneficial candidature. There again, the Society might see its own vote split. A spokesman tells me a number of customers want to stand on a pro-mutuality platform.

If you feel like throwing your own hat into the ring, nominations have to be in by 4 April.

PREMIER OIL announced its first set of full year results yesterday following the recent retirement of **Sir Barrie Stephens**, 70, who has jetted off to his home in Florida to enjoy the sun.

His successor **David John**, who is also non-executive chairman of The BOC Group and a non-exec at British Biotech, presented a good set of figures. Which didn't stop the market marking Premier's shares down 8 per cent.

There again, the oil industry has always had a turbulent relationship with City analysts, with the moguls suspecting that the teenage scribblers don't really understand the world of Black Gold.

Just last week **Pierre Gungley**, chief executive of Enterprise Oil, said to journalists as he started his own annual results presentation: "I hope you ask some better questions than the analysts."

Lars Andersen has joined Cavendish Corporate Finance, a corporate disposals boutique based in London, to head up the firm's IT sales division. Mr Andersen's impressive CV says: "He speaks French, German, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish."

I still think his lack of English may be a problem in London.

Double insurance strike rumours send shares soaring

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Insurance shares mesmerised the stock market. Rumours swirled that an overseas group planned to barge into the comfy £15bn merger arranged between Commercial Union and General Accident.

CU shot ahead 62p to 1,120p; GenAcc jumped 57p to 1,380p.

The rumour – astonishing even by the often outrageous standards of the market – suggested that a predator was about to block the merger by pouncing on the two insurance groups.

Idea, it was said, was the creation of the world's biggest insurance group. A theory supporting the take over yarn was that CU had rushed into the arms of GenAcc in order to avoid a hostile overseas strike. Now the thwarted predator was preparing its revenge with a double cash bid which would have to be in the region of £16bn.

Possible bidders with such a hoard of ammunition are few and far between. A couple of insurers and, of course, a clutch of banks.

There has for long been talk of a major clearing or mortgage bank descending on an insurance group. Such a strike would make sense for, say, Barclays or Lloyds TSB.

But it was the rumours of an overseas assault which caused the excitement. Although two giant mergers - Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham and Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer have crashed - the market remains on bid alert, convinced the round of big corporate adventures is far from over.

Regulators are getting more and more inquisitive but Diageo, which has emerged as the world's biggest spirits group without enduring too much hardship, is put forward as an example of official tolerance.

With corporate advisers earning fat fees from the urge to merge, the City is in no mood to allow this particular gravy train to be shunted into the sidings.

The CU/GenAcc story brushed other insurers with GRE up 22p to 458p; Royal Sun Alliance 27p to 808p and Prudential Corporation 20p to 934p. London & Manchester put on 10p to 566p.

The financial sector made a major contribution to Footsie's push to a new peak. Schroders, ahead of results, gained 95p to 2,395p. The figures are expected to be impressive but in these bid happy days there is a feeling they may be accompanied by some form of corporate action, such as a deal with Morgan Stanley. Halifax, on its Birmingham Midshires guzumping, firmed 17p to 942p. Positive noises from HSBC Securities helped the banking sector.

Footsie ended 9.6 points higher at 5,828.5p. The mid and small cap indices also achieved record highs.

Williams, which announced the sale of the Nu-Tone building materials business with its results, gained 22p to 410p but BTR, strong with Williams on Monday, fell 16.75p to 193.25p.

Dixons, due to be removed today from Footsie, fell 22p to 490p. Finance director Robert Schrager denied a profits warning was planned. Kingfisher rose 33p to 1,030p with SG Securities suggesting the shares would reach 1,100p.

Carlton Communications added 17.75p to 454.75p with Panmure Gordon producing a 560p target; Schroders suggested Reed International was heading for 570p - the shares fell 12p to 608p.

Take over speculation continued to haunt Zeneca, up 48p to 2,743p, and Reckitt & Colman, results tomorrow, hardened 32p to 1,091p.

BPB, the building materials group, allegedly jumped 57p to 400p. It looked like yet another order book hitch with the last order book trade going through for 9,000 shares at 400p. The last normal trade was at 348p and the final spread was 353p to 360p.

Independent Insurance, on results and director share buying, jumped 140p to 1,395p.

Carrs Milling fell 42.5p to 182.5p on a profit warning and recruitment group Prime People fell 2.5p to 10.5p on a denial of take over activity and figures below best expectations.

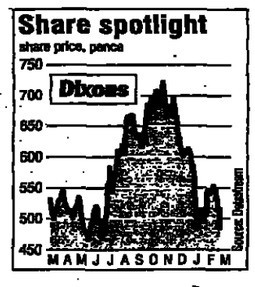
Oxford Instruments, the subject of a Henderson Crosthwaite investment dinner at London's Claridge's Hotel, jumped 17.5p to 325p. HC rate the shares a buy.

Queens Moat Houses, the slowly recovering hotel chain which has results soon, was heavily traded, ending 1.5p higher at 21.25p.

KS Biomedix, with a possible arthritis treatment, had another run, up 23p to 286.5p. The shares were 106p in January.

PolyDoc, the information group, was another still on the high road, improving a further 42.5p to 275p. John Lusty, the food group, hardened another 1.5p to 12.75p.

Healthcall fell 12p to 87.5p. Transworld Healthcare has dropped its 105p a share offer. HCMS, partly owned by Healthcare's management, had earlier made a 90p a share bid, pricing the company at £50.1m. Healthcare's chairman, Christopher Stewart-Smith, is recommending acceptance of the HCMS offer.



TAKING STOCK

MDIS (McDonnell Information Systems) climbed to its highest for more than a year, rising 5p to 54p. It has an appalling record. Floated at 260p four years ago it made heavy losses in 1995 and 1996. Since then new management has arrived and a £24.3m rescue cash call completed. Last year's figures are due soon and hopes are growing they will demonstrate MDIS is at last on the mend.

Keller, a foundation and ground strengthening group which worked on the controversial Millennium Dome, lifted profits for the tenth year running, scoring a 10 per cent gain to £13.8m. Sterling's strength cost some £1m. Profits this year should be around £16m. The shares, floated at 130p in 1994, rose 11p to 226.5p.

Philippine Gold, up 1p at 23.5p, is described as a "highly attractive package of gold mining assets", by stockbroker T Hoare & Co. which regards the shares as a speculative buy.

Owing to technical problems at Bloomberg, the closing share prices listed below are for 10 March

52 week High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E	Code
Alcoholic Beverages							
588	468	Allied Domecq	575.00	+12.00	4.3	14.9	0300
626	295	Bulmer(H.P.)	310.50	–	5.6	9.5	0836
32	21	Burn Stewart Distr.	29.50	–	14.4	8.9	4452
740	540	Diageo	663.00	+8.00	3.4	–	–
1040	795	Glenmorangie	830.00	–	2.0	20.1	2799
374	270	Highland Distill.	370.00	-1.50	4.1	21.5	0259
385	157	Matthew Clark	201.00x	+7.00	0.4	6.3	1556
Banks, Merchant							
728	398	Close Bros	726.50	+45.00	2.2	24.4	2083
365	326	Gerrard Gp	340.00	–	5.9	16.9	3543
277	215	Hambros	262.50	+0.50	3.6	20.0	2257
635	475	Leopold J	615.00	–	4.1	25.1	7280
58	40	Rea Bros	55.00	–	2.2	22.0	3466
2000	1220	Schroders NAV	2025.00	+35.00	1.3	22.0	2957
2384	1458	Schroders Ord	2300.00	+70.00	1.1	25.0	1485
110	59	Singer & Fried	110.00	+1.00	3.6	9.4	2759
428	301	Wasbrough	421.50x	–	4.2	19.0	3589
Banks, Retail							
838	770	Abbey Nat	834.00x	-1.00	3.3	18.0	2839
1001	533	Alliance Leic	931.00	+24.00	2.8	20.8	2230
806	402	AIB	766.50x	+3.00	–	1022.4	–
185	136	Bk of Ireland	140.00	+2.00	–	26.0	8...
740	509	Bk of Scotl	678.00	+18.00	1.6	21.5	3958
896	687	Barclays	860.00x	+19.00	2.6	24.3	1004
982	577	Halifax	935.00x	+15.00	–	21.3	3033
1310	1013	HSBC (75P)	1140.00x	+18.00	3.4	14.7	3533
1359	1108	HSBC (HK$10)	1237.00x	+33.00	3.6	13.8	3029
300	197	Lloyds TSB Gp	295.50x	+6.50	2.3	21.0	6395
1250	664	Natwest Bk	1086.00x	+6.00	3.7	29.8	1602
690	449	Northern Rock	661.00	-0.50	–	22.0	0
1005	508	Ryl Bk Scot	935.00	+32.00	2.9	16.9	2389
1094	483	Standard Ord	890.00x	+11.00	2.7	15.2	1481
398	266	Woolwich	380.00	+10.00	3.1	24.4	3377
Breweries Pubs & Rest							
1800	728	Bass	1008.00	+8.00	3.8	31.9	1005
150	133	Burtonwood	152.50	–	5.7	13.3	1039
156	110	City Gtr Pub	155.00	–	2.7	17.4	8041
151	126	Compass	145.50x	-3.00	1.3	29.3	4469
315	240	Bibridge P	298.50	–	2.6	14.2	4820
308	221	Enterprise Inns	302.50	–	2.1	16.6	4777
485	412	Fitr SmithNew	452.50	–	2.8	8.1	2613
343	235	Gibbs New	337.50x	–	3.7	22.8	2854
560	360	Greenalls Gp	450.50	–	4.8	8.4	1708
770	652	Greene King	794.50	-3.00	2.0	27.9	2340
237	153	Grosvenor Inns	228.50x	+1.00	2.5	61.8	5796
322	229	Chez Gerard	265.00	-6.50	1.3	25.4	3510
299	241	Hardys & H	286.50	–	6.6	9.4	2248
2850	2025	Holt (J)	2056.00	–	1.7	10.8	2326
78	56	Inn Business	64.50x	–	2.6	9.6	6000
357	280	Mansfield	328.00	-1.50	3.2	12.1	2326
104	255	Marston T	379.00	+10.50	3.7	9.7	2337
65	438	Morland	437.50	–	3.9	8.4	2547
853	617	Pizza Express	804.00x	+2.00	0.6	40.0	2961
438	303	Rank(ok (V)	325.00x	–	1.9	24.9	4656
1000	750	Regal Hotels	936.50x	–	1.1	22.7	7011
888	549	SmithNew B	860.00	+2.00	1.3	18.4	2111
355	222	Vaux Grp	336.50	+7.50	5.9	8.3	4779
340	231	Whitbread JD	306.50	+2.50	0.9	20.1	6326
1025	606	Whitbread	1010.00	+1.00	2.0	8.9	1456
705	450	Wade A Dudley	507.50	–	4.6	10.8	2326
703	530	Young & Co's	640.00	-3.50	1.0	22.1	3507
603	530	Young & Co's	530.00	-3.50	1.5	19.0	3508
Building/Construction							
37	16	AAP Indus	34.50	+4.00	–	–	3366
425	286	Allen	425.50	+2.00	2.8	23.5	1819
187	114	AMEC	154.00	-2.00	2.4	–	8311
545	355	Amec	537.50	–	3.3	24.9	2370
888	490	Andrew Sha	870.00	+8.00	4.7	20.9	1720
223	137	Ashtead	222.00x	+3.00	1.3	27.9	3572
68	47	Bertam	–	–	–	9.7	4062
310	229	Barratt Dev	268.50	+0.50	4.2	19.6	1813
218	155	Beazer	204.50	-0.50	2.8	12.8	1414
399	313	Bellway	345.50	-0.50	2.9	12.6	1813
35	17	Bethmark	34.50	–	–	9.8	5779
737	560	Berkeley	707.50	+3.00	1.7	14.4	1615
175	125	Bett Bros	160.00	–	3.3	4.7	1600
28	18	Bmw	18.50	-1.00	4.1	14.8	3893
385	260	Bost (Henry)	377.50	+2.50	3.7	11.1	1203
100	106	Bryant Gp	114.50x	+1.50	4.4	8.5	1014
125	100	CALA	118.50x	–	4.1	9.5	1673
125	81	Countryside	115.50	–	3.2	10.9	1813
128	87	Crest Nicholson	119.00x	–	2.9	42.1	1813
198	148	J L Eve	182.50x	–	4.1	11.4	0
1016	913	Glanton Hg	1035.00	–	2.2	8.4	2204
330	139	Hardwick Gore	182.50	+7.50	3.5	1.1	1371
185	137	Hendon Sect	194.00	+1.00	3.4	23.2	3253
60	193	Jones	181.50	-4.50	1.4	38.5	2956
372	21	Kier	358.50	+5.00	2.8	15.5	2326
183	130	Lafarge (I) A	138.00	+1.00	3.6	8.1	2341
138	130	Lang (J)	138.00	+1.00	3.6	8.1	2326
20	156	Marshalls	164.00	+0.50	4.7	9.9	2326
188	83	McAlpine A	90.00	+2.00	3.4	14.1	1327
139	107	McCarthy&S	108.00	-0.50	2.7	8.5	1389
39	158	Morgan Sindall	180.00	+4.50	2.1	12.8	6855
338	273	Morrison	322.50	+2.50	2.1	20.2	4653
144	78	Mowlem J	83.00	–	4.7	11.5	2326
266	103	Persimmon	249.00	+5.50	4.9	11.6	2326
145	101	Pospelog	122.50	–	4.0	21.7	7732
106	127	Redrow Gp	180.50	-0.50	2.5	13.8	1813
97	76	Swan Hill	86.00	–	3.8	13.6	1253
134	113	Try Homes	125.50	-2.00	7.3	7.5	2372
25	167	Taylor Wdrw	223.00	–	3.3	16.9	1813
109	180	Tilbury Dwg	128.00	+10.00	5.0	6.2	2326
85	70	VHE	81.50	–	3.3	165.0	6469
86	62	Wimpey	71.00	–	7.1	–	2326
153	110	Wolstenholme	128.50	–	4.6	11.1	1255
153	120	Westbrook	136.50	+0.50	3.1	8.0	2326
14	9	Wiggins	13.75	–	8.2	10.7	2326
69	495	Wilcon Homes	681.50	+1.00	2.3	20.9	6453
496	310	Wilson C	464.50	+1.50	1.8	15.1	5504
155	93	Wimpey G	138.50	+1.50	3.4	8.9	1535
Building Materials							
58	37	Aggregate Ind	54.50	+0.50	4.4	25.5	2326
219	197	Anglian Gp	214.50	–	5.5	13.8	6053
11	8	Bagnall(Jos) Grp	9.50	-0.50	4.3	0.0	4958
452	277	Blue Circle	370.00	-1.00	4.3	15.7	2657
400	248	BPB Indus	343.00	-4.00	3.6	17.1	2326
14	9	Brandon	10.50	–	3.6	8.8	1440
85	107	Cape	82.50	–	4.7	–	1813
302	159	Caradon	202.00	+1.00	6.3	12.6	5372
825	590	CRH	828.50x	+4.00	–	1807.6	2453
168	81	Derby Gp	149.50	–	2.3	12.7	5753
250	247	Ennis	168.50	–	7.3	9.3	5756
350	40	Hanson	43.00	–	–	3.5	2372
87	19	Graham Gp	177.00	–	4.3	17.0	1813
349	188	Helphimd J	247.50	–	4.9	17.6	2255
1340	1130	Hanson	1281.00	+6.00	2.1	12.4	1255
289	179	Hepworth	238.50	-6.50	3.8	12.1	1255
268	19	Heywood W	223.00	–	7.7	10.1	2255
53	32	Ibstock	34.00	-0.50	4.6	28.4	1354
530	173	Jacksons Gp	35.00	–	4.8	10.3	2354
290	65	Kingspan	225.00	–	–	14.0	5372
137	63	Marley	99.50	-2.00	5.8	11.1	1255
143	100	Marshalls	133.50x	–	4.9	17.1	2326
419	229	Meyer Int	399.00	-1.00	2.7	8.7	2326
88	65	Norcros	80.00	+1.50	2.4	8.2	1326
107	104	Pilkington	107.00	-2.00	2.9	26.0	2326
254	187	Polypipe	177.00	+0.50	2.6	9.5	4453
142	95	PTI Gp	15.50	-1.50	–	8.6	0
148	79	Quipguard	145.00	+0.00	3.3	0.7	1310
1148	770	RMC	1140.00	+11.00	2.3	12.4	2326
67	17	Rubereoid	62.50	+1.00	1.8	20.8	1437
140	105	Ruddy Gp	125.50	–	3.3	8.5	4750
138	124	Sherpa & F	129.50	–	4.3	8.4	6400
347	196	SIG	221.50	–	–	15.0	2944
13	12	Spring Ram	13.50	–	4.8	12.3	1454
184	85	Tarmac	180.00	+1.00	2.2	20.5	2407
580	457	Travis Perkins	777.00	–	0.4	3.4	2372
118	87	Univ Ceramic	110.00	-6.00	2.6	9.4	2388
140	140	Wolseley	–	–	–	–	–
Chemicals							
116	135	Albright & Wil	172.50	+0.50	4.7	12.4	3956
205	99	AM Colloids	203.50	–	3.0	29.0	3533
117	92	Ardentby Gp	95.50	–	3.2	17.7	5481
199	113	BOC	177.00	+0.00	3.4	14.3	1008
197	161	Brent Int	173.50	+3.50	3.3	0.6	1357
195	194	Bts Vita	194.00	-3.50	0.9	14.2	4357
179	141	BTP	158.00	+1.50	4.2	17.6	1357
96	152	Cambridge Wt	171.00	–	4.1	21.4	1443
218	134	Courtaulds	162.50	-3.00	4.6	17.5	1357
410	245	Croda	403.00	–	2.8	18.7	1357
104	104	Deeflar	104.50	–	4.9	9.1	5382
118	99	Dominick	118.50	-1.50	–	–	–
107	219	Elm & Fred	200.00x	–	4.4	0.8	1357
77	50	Europ Colr	60.50	–	5.0	10.8	3357
86	59	Midlands Ind	81.00	+0.50	–	48.4	6404
148	114	Holliday Chem	142.00	–	3.9	7.8	3357
285	183	ICI	285.00x	+3.00	3.9	9.8	3357
50	34	Inspec Gp	34.50x	-2.00	3.9	16.5	2357
18	13	Kalon Gp	14.00	+0.50	3.9	9.3	0357
219	197	Laporte	216.00	–	5.9	24.8	2357
		Mondaire	238.50	–	3.4	14.0	4326
43	200	Morgan	32.50	–	4.2	11.3	0
16	11	Norkem	16.00	–	–	–	–
370	230	Petrofi	366.00x	-3.00	2.1	10.3	1357
245	173	Scapa	189.50	-1.00	3.9	10.0	2454
29	17	Smith(W H)	19.00	+0.50	7.7	7.3	2357
97	79	Synthetic Ind	87.50	–	5.1	14.5	3357
193	158	Victrex	187.50	–	1.5	14.9	3357
193	128	Yule Cats	137.50	–	3.8	14.1	4326
173	140	Zeneca	2385.00	–	–	–	–
Distributors							
220	187	Alexon Grp	204.50	+10.00	3.5	9.3	5083
138	100	Allnatt	128.00	–	3.9	11.1	8630
119	90	Asd	119.00	–	3.8	10.7	2631
217	150	Asda Chaplets	203.50	+1.00	1.5	20.5	2653
2	1	Avis Gp	1.75	–	–	–	–
42	29	Bell Pumps	37.50	-1.00	5.4	8.8	2409
173	120	Cowslips	138.50	–	2.5	8.7	4453
90	61	Clayton Dilwy	88.50	–	6.3	8.2	5075
210	73	Dawson Int	83.00	–	4.2	6.2	5075
39	26	Dixons	139.50	+1.00	7.6	0.5	6724
315	34	Dixon Motor	201.00	–	2.0	20.5	1811
142	102	Electrocomp	104.00	+1.00	2.0	13.5	2372
1000	800	Electrocomp	1000.00	+50.00	3.9	22.0	4003
200	174	Emerson	200.00	+2.00	2.0	12.1	2372
248	187	Hepworth Wm	243.00	-0.50	4.6	28.4	2384
72	43	Bassett	54.00	-0.50	4.6	28.4	2384
138	123	Giltspur Gp	35.00	–	4.8	10.3	2384
290	65	Kingston	225.00	–	–	14.0	5372
137	63	Marley	99.50	-2.00	5.8	11.1	1255
143	100	Marshalls	133.50x	–	4.9	17.1	2326
419	229	Meyer Int	399.00	-1.00	2.7	8.7	2326
88	65	Norcros	80.00	+1.50	2.4	8.2	1326
107	104	Pilkington	107.00	-2.00	2.9	26.0	2326
254	187	Polypipe	177.00	+0.50	2.6	9.5	4453
142	95	PTI Gp	15.50	-1.50	–	8.6	0
148	79	Quipguard	145.00	+0.00	3.3	0.7	1310
1148	770	RMC	1140.00	+11.00	2.3	12.4	2326
67	17	Rubereoid	62.50	+1.00	1.8	20.8	1437
140	105	Ruddy Gp	125.50	–	3.3	8.5	4750
138	124	Sherpa & F	129.50	–	4.3	8.4	6400
347	196	SIG	221.50	–	–	15.0	2944
13	12	Spring Ram	13.50	–	4.8	12.3	1454
184	85	Tarmac	180.00	+1.00	2.2	20.5	2407
580	457	Travis Perkins	777.00	–	0.4	3.4	2372
118	87	Univ Ceramic	110.00	-6.00	2.6	9.4	2388
140	140	Wolseley	–	–	–	–	–
Chemicals							
116	135	Albright & Wil	172.50	+0.50	4.7	12.4	3956
205	99	AM Colloids	203.50	–	3.0	29.0	3533
117	92	Ardentby Gp	95.50	–	3.2	17.7	5481
199	113	BOC	177.00	+0.00	3.4	14.3	1008
197	161	Brent Int	173.50	+3.50	3.3	0.6	1357
195	194	Bts Vita	194.00	-3.50	0.9	14.2	4357
179	141	BTP	158.00	+1.50	4.2	17.6	1357
96	152	Cambridge Wt	171.00	–	4.1	21.4	1443
218	134	Courtaulds	162.50	-3.00	4.6	17.5	1357
410	245	Croda	403.00	–	2.8	18.7	1357
104	104	Deeflar	104.50	–	4.9	9.1	5382
118	99	Dominick	118.50	-1.50	–	–	–
107	219	Elm & Fred	200.00x	–	4.4	0.8	1357
77	50	Europ Colr	60.50	–	5.0	10.8	3357
86	59	Midlands Ind	81.00	+0.50	–	48.4	6404
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		Mondaire	238.50	–	3.4	14.0	4326
43	200	Morgan	32.50	–	4.2	11.3	0
16	11	Norkem	16.00	–	–	–	–
370	230	Petrofi	366.00x	-3.00	2.1	10.3	1357
245	173	Scapa	189.50	-1.00	3.9	10.0	2454
29	17	Smith(W H)	19.00	+0.50	7.7	7.3	2357
97	79	Synthetic Ind	87.50	–	5.1	14.5	3357
193	158	Victrex	187.50	–	1.5	14.9	3357
193	128	Yule Cats	137.50	–	3.8	14.1	4326
173	140	Zeneca	2385.00	–	–	–	–
Distributors							
220	187	Alexon Grp	204.50	+10.00	3.5	9.3	5083
138	100	Allnatt	128.00	–	3.9	11.1	8630
119	90	Asd	119.00	–	3.8	10.7	2631
217	150	Asda Chaplets	203.50	+1.00	1.5	20.5	2653
2	1	Avis Gp	1.75	–	–	–	–
42	29	Bell Pumps	37.50	-1.00	5.4	8.8	2409
173	120	Cowslips	138.50	–	2.5	8.7	4453
90	61	Clayton Dilwy	88.50	–	6.3	8.2	5075
210	73	Dawson Int	83.00	–	4.2	6.2	5075
39	26	Dixons	139.50	+1.00	7.6	0.5	6724
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138	123	Giltspur Gp	35.00	–	4.8	10.3	2384
290	65	Kingston	225.00	–	–	14.0	5372
137	63	Marley	99.50	-2.00	5.8	11.1	1255
143	100	Marshalls	133.50x	–	4.9	17.1	2326
419	229	Meyer Int	399.00	-1.00	2.7	8.7	2326
88	65	Norcros	80.00	+1.50	2.4	8.2	1326
107	104	Pilkington	107.00	-2.00	2.9	26.0	2326
254	187	Polypipe	177.00	+0.50	2.6	9.5	4453
142	95	PTI Gp	15.50	-1.50	–	8.6	0
148	79	Quipguard	145.00	+0.00	3.3	0.7	1310
1148	770	RMC	1140.00	+11.00	2.3	12.4	2326
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138	124	Sherpa & F	129.50	–	4.3	8.4	6400
347	196	SIG	221.50	–	–	15.0	2944
13	12	Spring Ram	13.50	–	4.8	12.3	1454
184	85	Tarmac	180.00	+1.00	2.2	20.5	2407
580	457	Travis Perkins	777.00	–	0.4	3.4	2372
118	87	Univ Ceramic	110.00	-6.00	2.6	9.4	2388
140	140	Wolseley	–	–	–	–	–

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the shareprice divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptionals.
Other dealer: Ex rights; x Ex-dividend; a Ex-all; s Suspended; p Partly Paid; nn Nil Paid; *AIM.
Gilt Prices are Bloomberg Generics. Source: Bloomberg

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Seaq volume: 783.5m trades 84,305 Gilts index 103.92 +0.07

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

at 5:00pm

Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol
Dana Petroleum	19.34m	Mitmac PLC	4.64m	Telewest Comm	3.32m	Albert Fisher	2.99m
Arjo Wiggins	9.30m	Pace Micro Tech	3.96m	Wates City of London		Electra Inv Tst	2.90m
Rage Software	9.11m	Queens Moat House	3.25m			Hickson Intl	2.88m
Mirror Group	5.90m	3Web		Medeva PLC	3.21m	Emerald Energy	2.86m
Wiggins Group	5.16m	Fitzgroup PLC	3.49m	Sedgwick Group	3.18m	Wheyfeg (G) Hldgs	2.85m

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open	5782.9		11:00	5778.6	Down 4.3	14:00	5785.4	Up 2.5
9:00	5771.7	Down 11.2	12:00	5770.7	Down 12.2	15:00	5794.3	Up 11.4
10:00	5780.6	Up 27.7	13:00	5776.6	Down 6.3	16:00	5828.2	Up 38.3
						Close	5828.9	Up 36.0

Government Securities

52 week High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Red YtdCode
Index-Linked						
116.43	113.90	Tsy I/L 4.625 98	116.43	0.00	4.57	4572
137.30	128.13	Tsy I/L 2.5 01	136.72	0.00	3.08	2546
114.37	111.69	Tsy I/L 2.5 03	114.10	0.00

24/UNIT TRUSTS

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling Spot	Sterling 1 month	Sterling 3 month	Dollar Spot	Dollar 1 month	Dollar 3 month	D-Mark Spot
UK	10000			0.6049	0.6058	0.6076	0.3343
Australia	2.4322	2.4291	2.4230	1.4711	1.4718	1.4723	0.8131
Austria	21.049	21.012	20.941	12.732	12.728	12.725	7.0367
Belgium	61.762	61.545	61.146	37.345	37.285	37.155	20.641
Canada	2.3464	2.3409	2.3311	1.4193	1.4152	1.4085	0.7844
Denmark	11.403	11.367	11.298	6.8974	6.8862	6.8549	3.8022
ECU	1.5119	1.5077	1.4996	0.9145	0.9118	0.9073	0.5113
Finland	9.0797	9.0470	8.9708	5.4919	5.4808	5.4511	3.0358
France	10.029	9.994	9.929	6.0660	6.0544	6.0335	3.3627
Germany	2.9913	2.9809	2.9615	1.8093	1.8059	1.7996	1.0000
Greece	472.33	470.69	467.06	285.65	284.30	282.87	158.10
Hong Kong	12.804	12.759	12.673	7.7445	7.7475	7.7195	4.2804
Ireland	1.2055	1.2042	1.2012	0.7315	0.7308	0.7300	0.4080
Italy	2945.4	2941.8	2933.5	1781.5	1782.2	1782.6	994.53
Japan	203.32	207.06	204.70	123.01	125.45	124.39	69.843
Malaysia	6.2477	6.2609	6.2848	3.7790	3.7930	3.8190	2.0886
Mexico	14.108			8.5330			4.7162
Netherlands	3.3723	3.3603	3.3380	2.0396	2.0357	2.0283	1.1274
New Zealand	2.8144	2.8076	2.7943	1.7025	1.7007	1.6979	0.9247
Norway	12.477	12.437	12.365	7.5468	7.5345	7.5134	4.1711
Portugal	306.11	305.35	303.78	185.15	184.98	184.59	102.33
Saudi Arabia	6.2006	6.2842	6.1764	3.7505	3.7525	3.7543	2.0729
Singapore	2.7155	2.7149	2.7182	1.6425	1.6448	1.6505	0.9078
South Africa	8.1508	8.2006	8.2845	4.9300	4.9660	5.0340	2.7248
Spain	253.66	253.03	251.76	153.43	153.23	152.98	84.798
Sweden	13.138	13.139	13.097	7.9500	7.9721	7.9586	4.4105
Switzerland	2.4270	2.4127	2.3875	1.4680	1.4616	1.4507	0.8113
US	1.6533			1.0000			0.5527

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.6533	1.0000	Oman	0.6384	0.3850
Brazil	1.8862	1.1300	Pakistan	72.745	44.000
China	13.688	8.2780	Philippines	65.388	39.550
Czech Rep	55.055	33.905	Poland	5.7593	3.4835
Egypt	5.6207	3.3997	Qatar	6.0198	3.6408
Ghana	38.067	23.025	Russia	100.289	60.660
Hungary	344.81	208.58	South Korea	2473.8	1496.70
India	65.206	39.440	Taiwan	52.849	31.968
Indonesia	148797	90.000	Thailand	71.505	43.250
Kuwait	0.5043	0.3050	Turkey	382425	231310
Nigeria	138.88	84.000	UAE	6.0726	3.6730

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	7.25%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	8.50%	Discount	0.50%
France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Intervention	3.30%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.69%	Discount	2.75%
Italy		Prime	6.50%	Spain		Central	3.30%
Discount	5.50%	Discount	5.00%	10-d Repo	4.50%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
SpAdvance	3.30%	Discount	3.50%	Repo(Ave)	4.35%	Lombard	2.75%

Bond Yields

Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.90	-0.02	4.99	0.06	5.27	0.08	5.68	0.11	6.14	0.16
Belgium	3.82	0.00	3.76	0.00	4.12	0.00	4.45	0.01	5.06	-0.01
Canada	4.63	0.01	5.11	0.02	5.10	0.02	5.37	0.06	5.80	0.08
ECU	4.34	0.00	4.33	-0.02	4.24	0.00	4.59	0.02	5.06	0.04
France	3.00	0.00	3.43	-0.01	4.00	0.03	4.57	0.02	5.02	0.05
Germany	3.53	0.00	3.75	0.00	3.89	0.02	4.53	0.04	4.98	0.05
Italy	5.80	-0.01	5.03	-0.12	4.77	-0.01	4.89	0.00	5.30	0.00
Japan	0.47	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.62	0.00	1.38	-0.01	1.88	-0.02
Netherlands	3.47	0.00	3.75	0.00	4.03	0.00	4.49	0.02	5.00	0.03
Spain	4.40	0.00	4.35	0.03	4.29	0.03	4.57	0.03	5.17	0.03
Sweden	4.39	0.00	4.85	0.03	4.90	0.03	5.15	0.01	5.48	0.01
Switzerland	0.97	0.00	1.25	-0.02	1.47	0.02	1.99	0.01	2.88	0.01
UK	7.00	0.00	7.57	0.00	6.80	0.05	6.37	0.05	6.10	0.08
US	5.06	-0.03	5.15	0.02	5.62	0.05	5.72	0.00	5.76	0.07

Money Market Rates

	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Treasury Bills			7.28 7.01	7.25 7.00		
LIBOR						
Domestic Deps	6.94 7.06	7.39 7.31	7.41 7.47	7.47 7.53	7.47 7.53	7.50 7.58
Eurosterling Deps	7.25 7.38	7.34 7.41	7.47 7.53	7.50 7.56	7.50 7.56	7.50 7.58
Eligible Bank Bills			7.31 7.25	7.32 7.28	7.32 7.28		
Sterling CDs			7.48 7.40	7.50 7.42	7.50 7.42	7.47 7.39
Eurodollar CDs			5.61	5.81	5.81	
ECU Deposits			4.18 4.28	4.18 4.28	4.18 4.28	

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract		Settlement	High	Low	Est floor volume	Open interest
Long Gilt	Mar-98	122.47	122.97	122.47	1019.00	2895.00
5 Yr Gilt	Jun-98	101.97	102.15	101.94	2385.00	4658.00
German Bund	Mar-98	107.45	107.81	107.36	21398.00	171301.00
Italian Bond	Mar-98	118.73	118.94	118.69	5325.00	62920.00
Japan Govt Bd	Mar-98	129.96	130.02	129.82	2062.00	0.00
3 Mth Sterling	Mar-98	92.39	92.42	92.38	4775.800	124844.00
	Jun-98	92.48	92.49	92.46	5098.00	138048.00
3-Mth Euromark	Mar-98	96.47	96.49	96.47	27990.00	361004.00
	Jun-98	96.35	96.36	96.34	83129.00	389322.00
3-Mth Eurolira	Mar-98	94.14	94.16	94.09	3091.00	121833.00
	Jun-98	95.28	95.32	95.21	91932.00	227915.00
3 Mth Euryen	Mar-98	98.15	98.16	98.18	100	0.00
3 Mth Euroswiss	Mar-98	98.93	98.98	98.93	1129.00	64988.00
	Jun-98	98.71	98.82	98.70	14378.00	82491.00
3 Mth ECU	Mar-98	95.68	95.70	95.68	119.00	8630.00
	Mar-98	95.74	95.76	95.74	218.00	7653.00
FTSE 100	Mar-98	5810.00	5848.00	5790.00	986.000	57425.00

Liffe FTSE 100 Index Option

Settlement Price: 5807.70

Series	Mar Call	Mar Imp Vol	Mar Put	Mar Imp Vol	Apr Call	Apr Put	May Call	May Put	Jun Call	Jun Put
5750	162	21	47	19	231	103	289	144	352	180
5800	124	18	62	18	201	123	258	163	320	198
5850	94	19	83	17	171	142	227	182	289	217
5900	67	18	108	17	141	163	195	202	257	236

Commodity Indices

Goldman Sachs 5:30pm

	Base date	Last	Chg	%chg	31 Dec	%chg YTD
Index	1970=100	164.72	-0.23	-0.14	215.26	-23.48
Agricultural	1970=100	224.69	-0.82	-0.36	231.23	-2.83
Energy	1983=100	57.08	0.00	0.00	85.86	-33.52
Ind Metals	1977=100	151.73	0.00	0.00	163.79	-10.31
Livestock	1970=100	161.14	-1.56	-0.96	191.03	-15.65
Prec Metals	1973=100	402.24	-4.56	-1.12	463.54	-13.22

Energy

* prices at 5:30pm

Brent Crude ($/barrel) IPE	Close	Chg	Vol	Gas oil ($/tonne) IPE	Close	Chg	Vol	WTI Crude ($/barrel) NYM	Last	Chg	Products ($/tonne) Spot CIF NW Eur	
Apr	14.08	0.03	13093	Mar	191.50	-0.50	4549	Apr	15.40	0.06	Gasoline 95	183.00
May	14.46	0.06	6971	Apr	193.75	-0.25	4842	May	15.74	0.06	Naphtha	150.00
Jun	14.82	0.06	2712	May	196.25	-0.50	1069	Jun	16.12	0.08	Gasoil	190.00
								Jul	16.46	0.07	Fuel Oil (3.5%s)	97.00

Industrial Metals

LME ($/tonne)	Cash		Chg	3 month		Chg	LME stocks	Chg
Aluminium HG	1445	1446	-7.00	1480.5	1481	-7	587700	-2025
Aluminium Alloy	1268	1273	-7.00	1295	1300	-5	42680	80
Copper A	1730	1731	47.00	1753	1754	47	371825	-3725
Lead	539.5	540.5	-2.00	547	548	-1	109900	500
Nickel	5255	5260	-45.00	5345	5350	-45	65790	78
Tin	5435	5440	105.00	5436	5440	100	9660	-70
Zinc	1030.5	1031.5	-5.00	1056	1057	-5	469575	-1100

Precious Metals

pm fix/$ per oz		Day's chg	Year's chg	pm fix/£ per oz		Day's chg	Year's chg	Coins ($)		Day's chg	Yr's trade chg
Platinum	384.00	-4.00	-3.50	Platinum	232.75	-2.40	-6.25	Krugrands	297.05		-65.20
Palladium	234.50	0.00	84.75	Palladium	142.10	0.00	49.80	Sovs	69.80		
Silver	5.50	-0.01	.19	Silver	3.34	-0.05	.087	Nobles	374.05		
Gold	297.00	-1.35	-62.40					Maple Leaf	311.05		-6.145

Agricultural

* at 5:30pm

Cocoa LIFFE	£/tonne	Coffee LIFFE	$/tonne	Barley LIFFE	£/tonne	Potatoes LIFFE	£/tonne	Lge Potatoes IOA	$25k kg
Mar98	1039.00	Mar98	1860.00	Mar98	78.25	Mar98	70.00	Apr98	65.000
May98	1052.00	May98	1658.00	May98	75.00	Apr98	65.00	May98	65.550
Jul98	1071.00	Jul98	1635.00	Sep98	75.85	May98	71.00	Jun98	66.150
Vol:	3217	Vol:	10703	Vol:	22	Vol:	83	Vol:	40259

White Sugar* LIFFE	$/tonne	Freight LIFFE	$60k pt	Wheat LIFFE	$/tonne	Corn* CBOT	Cents/bshl	Soya Beans* CBOT	$/5k bshl
Mar98	288.30	Feb98	105.00	Mar98	77.30	Mar98	268.00	Mar98	251.0
May98	275.30	Apr98	117.00	May98	79.25	May98	274.25	May98	258.0
Aug98	280.50	Jul98	103.00	Jul98	81.25	Jul98	280.75	Jul98	262.0
Vol:	3495	Vol:	10	Vol:	432	Vol:	75128	Vol:	341

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Fund	Bid	Offer
AXA Eq & Law Distribution Ser 6	1830	192.81
AXA Equity & Law Balanced Ser 6	1053.10	110.85
AXA Equity & Law Higher Inc Ser 6	1078.00	114.50
AXA Equity & Law UK Equities Ser 6	1439.10	152.00
Abbey Equity Ser 4	34.62	36.50
Abbey International Ser 4	208.50	219.40
Abbey Managed Ser 4	91.80	96.60
Abbey National Managed	175.00	184.30
Abbey National UK Equity	153.1	161.2
Abbey Equity Acc Ser 3	232.70	239.80
Abbey Multiple Inv Acc Ser 3	143.60	151.00
Allied Dunbar Distribution Bond	28.00	30.40
Allied Dunbar Equity Acc	232.40	243.00
Allied Dunbar Gen 4 High Inc Ser 2	53.20	56.00
Allied Dunbar Managed Acc	166.40	157.20
Allied Dunbar Property Acc	78.90	83.00
Bandon Equity Acc Ser 3	136.70	143.50
Bandon International Acc Ser 2	68.20	52.30
Bandon Managed Acc Ser 2	75.40	79.40
Black Horse Income Fund Ser 2	121.84	127.78
Black Horse Managed Invest Ser 2	69.76	73.22
Canada Managed Ser 2	107.61	108.26
Clerical Medical With Profits Bond	1270	1330
Clerical Medical Equity Equity	534.0	562.00
Clerical Medical Equity Sportfund	48.00	44.10
Commercial Union Managed	69.90	84.00
Commercial Union UK Equity	114.0	120.70
Commercial Union With Profit	14.20	15.00
Eagle Star Managed (2)	228.30	241.40
Equity Performance	18.40	20.70
Friends Provident Managed	48.20	50.70
Friends Provident UK Equity	88.20	103.40
Friends Provident With Profit	22.00	23.90
Gen Managed	43.00	43.40
General Accident Prov Mut Mgd Conversion	72.50	72.50
General Accident Prov Mutual Eq Dist	127.70	127.70
General Accident Distinct With-Prft	17.00	18.00
Guardian International Acc	62.40	67.10
Guardian Managed Acc	97.40	102.00
Guardian Royal Exchange Equity Acc	122.10	128.00
Hill Samuel Equity	108.50	115.00
Hill Samuel Managed Ser A	80.40	85.00
Hill Life Global Mgd Premium Ser	102.10	97.00
J Rothschild JF&GR James Place Managed	122.60	94.10
Legal & General Equity Acc 09	148.10	200.00
Legal & General International Ac	0.00	72.00
Legal & General Managed Acc 02	101.00	106.00
Lincoln (mgd) UK Equity Acc	71.00	77.00
Lincoln (mgd) UK Mgd Acc	30.00	77.00
Lincoln (Lautenberg Mgd Acc Ser 3	70.00	76.00
London & Manch Flexible Sr Pn Acc	82.30	82.30
London Equity	145.00	145.00
London Mixed	85.70	85.70
M & G Managed Bond Acc	100.20	109.70
M & G Recovery Bond Acc	100.20	109.40
Manchester Investors Managed	68.00	70.00
Midland Balanced	72.60	76.00
Midland UK Equity	81.30	83.00
NPI Managed	69.80	73.40
National Westminster Birth Mgd	18.00	19.00
National Westminster Managed Mgd	10.30	10.90
National Westminster UK Eq Ser 2	83.60	87.70
Norwich Union Managed Ex Mt Mkt (MF)	2.00	2.00
Norwich Union Managed	100.99	24.62
Norwich Union Managed With Profits	17.67	18.62
Pearl Equity (Neq)	45.40	47.70
Pearl Managed (Neq)	37.30	39.00
Prudential Individual Mgd Ser 2	173.70	182.90
Prudential Prudund Managed	83.60	93.30
Royal Life Managed	84.40	89.00
Royal Scottish Growth Managed	70.40	75.30
Royal Scottish UK Equity	38.60	39.90
Scottish Amicable Equity Ser 1	83.30	88.20
Scottish Amicable Managed Ser 1	64.20	67.90
Scottish Equitable Mngd	33.30	40.00
Scottish Life Managed	42.20	44.40
Scottish Mutual Safety	31.50	33.40
Scottish Provident Inst Bis Clap Ed	32.50	36.00
Scottish Provident Inst With Profit	42.30	45.30
Scottish Widows International	68.40	73.00
Scottish Widows Mngd	65.80	69.70
Standard Equity	174.70	183.80
Standard Managed	34.80	36.60
Standard Fixed Interest	34.50	36.70
Standard Managed	98.80	103.70
Sun Alliance Managed	108.50	113.90
Sun Alliance Managed	138.80	138.10
Sun Life Balanced Distribution Acc	108.00	113.00
Sun Life Distribution	23.20	25.40
Sun Life Managed Acc	38.70	39.00
Sun Life Of Canada Confederation Eq	128.10	135.10
Sun Life Of Canada Mgdn Lif Eq Acc	1230.10	1296.40
Sun Life Of Canada Mgdn Lif Mgd Acc	57.80	60.80
Sun Life UK Equity Acc	34.80	36.70
Sun Life of Canada Century Equity	39.20	39.20
Sun Life of Canada Century Managed	70.00	74.00
199 Equity	58.30	59.30
199 Hornsleyer	33.60	34.40

Foreign Exchange Rates powered by FINANCIAL EXPRESS Bloomberg www.bloomberg.com/uk

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Bookmakers windy about Blowing

Racing

By Greg Wood

PUNTERS are often dubious about just how much money the bookies have taken when a horse shortens in an ante-post list, but the whole process reached its logical – if somewhat bizarre – conclusion yesterday when the odds against a runner in Saturday's Imperial Cup at Sandown were cut almost in half, even though the bookmaker in question had not laid a single penny for it.

The horse in question was Blowing Wind, trained by Martin Pipe, who was an 8-1 chance in the first list issued by William Hill yesterday, with the book due to open this morning. On a subsequent press release, it even seemed that he had drifted out to 10-1, but by yesterday evening, he was down to 9-2, after the firm's odds-setters had a long second look at the race. Coral cut Blowing Wind to 4-1 yesterday *after after initially* quoting him at 6-1.

Punters may complain that if a firm takes a view, it should stand by it and lay it, if only for five minutes, although it is hard to see how Hills ever came up with their original price. Pipe's record in the Imperial Cup is outstanding, and he is also the only trainer to have claimed the £50,000 bonus put up by Sunderlands, the race sponsors, every year for a horse which can win the Imperial and then any race at the Cheltenham Festival the following week.

Blowing Wind is clearly being targeted at the same lucrative double, and will be ridden by Tony McCoy, the champion jockey. The best price against Blowing Wind this morning is 7-1 with the Tote, but that too is unlikely to survive the first frantic seconds of trading.

*Pipe will also go to the Fes*tival with a predictably strong team – one of his horses, Tamarindo, is entered in no fewer than eight of the meeting's 20 races, and would no doubt be in the other 12 if he were qualified. In the Gold Cup, a race which has so far eluded him, he will be represented by Cyborgo and Challenger Du Luc, but the strength of the challenge facing his runners increased yesterday when it was confirmed that Suny Bay, the Hennessy Gold Cup winner, will take his place in the field a week tomorrow.

Charlie Brooks, his trainer, will also be two-handed, with Couldnt Be Better, who was third behind Imperial Call two seasons ago, also expected to take part following a useful piece of work with Suny Bay on Monday. Suny Bay is best priced at 11-1 for the Gold Cup *with William Hill, while Could*nt Be Better is among the outsiders at 66-1.

At the other end of the market, See More Business and Dorans Pride are disputing favouritism, although if the Irish runners – particularly Istabraq and Florida Pearl – go well on the first two days of the meeting, Dorans Pride will surely start favourite as bookmakers with multiple-bet liabilities try to reduce their potential loss.

The renewed strength of the Irish challenge is clear from the prices offered about the to*tal number of winners the visi*tors will have. Ladbrokes issued their list yesterday, and make either four or five winners their favourite, at 5-1. No winners at all is reckoned a 50-1 chance, while the Irish bookie Sean Graham is even more bullish, at 66-1 about a blank.

*Another Gold Cup candi*date, The Grey Monk, was also the subject of encouraging reports yesterday, although it is still not certain that Gordon Richards's chaser will shake off the effects of a virus in time to line up for the race.

"He's schooled over three fences this morning and done three little bits of work," Nicky Richards, the trainer's son, said, "but whether he gets to Cheltenham or not is still another matter." Punters will thus be wary of taking the 10-1 against The Grey Monk which is of*fered by Ladbrokes.*

Ladbrokes takeover of Coral likely to be referred to Monopolies & Mergers Commission, page 20

Imperial Cup Handicap Hurdle (2m 110yds)

			C	H	L	T
141-22	CADOUGOLD (56) (D) M Pipe 7 12 0	—	14-1	11-1	12-1	14-1
1922	STAR RAGE (21) (D) M Johnston 8 11 9	D Gallagher	12-1	14-1	14-1	16-1
F-6P21	L'OPERA (16) (D) D Nicholson 5 11 2	—	16-1	16-1	16-1	12-1
02-133	GALES CAVALIER (106) (D) D Gandolfo 10 11 2	—	33-1	25-1	20-1	25-1
02103	BLOWING WIND (49) M Pipe 5 11 0	—	4-1	9-2	6-1	7-1
10050	INDEFENCE (28) (D) Mrs J Pitman 7 10 12	—	40-1	40-1	33-1	33-1
-11204	NAHRAWALI (28) (D) G L Moore 7 10 11	—	10-1	16-1	10-1	9-1
11-232	ALABANG (40) (D) (BF) Miss J A Camacho 7 10 8	G Bradley	8-1	10-1	8-1	9-1
0-1143	SERENUS (19) (D) N Henderson 5 10 7	—	16-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
F0F/63	DEBUTANTE DAYS (14) (CD) Miss H Knight 6 10 7	—	14-1	16-1	16-1	10-1
80-231	KINGSFOLD PET (7) (D) M Haynes 9 10 6	C Llewellyn	14-1	14-1	10-1	12-1
1212	NISHAMIRA (21) (D) D Nicholson 6 10 6	—	16-1	12-1	14-1	14-1
12-211	NORDANCE PRINCE (18) (CD) Miss V Williams 7 10 6	N Williamson	8-1	7-1	8-1	8-1
5-3433	STAR SELECTION (42) (D) J Mackie 7 10 4	E Husband (3)	16-1	20-1	16-1	20-1
P3041	DOCTOOR (8) (CD) M Pipe 8 10 3	—	20-1	16-1	16-1	16-1
1110-3	*MORE DASH THANCASH (19) (D) Mrs M Jones 8 10 1*	—	16-1	14-1	16-1	16-1
P6P52	DANEGOLD (21) (D) M Channon 6 9 13	D Byrne	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
22221	HOUSE OF DREAMS (28) (D) G M Moore 6 9 11	A Maguire	20-1	20-1	12-1	20-1
0-1223	REGENCY RAKE (72) (BF) A L Moore (Ir) 6 9 9	—	16-1	14-1	10-1	12-1
1B3/00	RUSHAWUNISH (44) (D) M R Bosley 7 9 8	—	33-1	50-1	40-1	50-1
25-14P	SILENT CRACKER (61) (BF) M Pitman 6 9 8	—	33-1	40-1	40-1	40-1
0-1150	BALLADUR (30) (CD) (BF) Mrs J Pitman 5 9 7	—	33-1	33-1	33-1	33-1
531	NOH EXPRESS (39) (D) Mrs J Ramsden 6 9 8	B Fenton	12-1	10-1	14-1	12-1
1-0302	FAIRLY SHARP (16) (D) J Mackie 5 9 5	—	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
1211	SADLER'S REALM (72) (D) P Hobbs 5 9 5	—	16-1	16-1	14-1	20-1
-32125	ALKA INTERNATIONAL (42) (D) Mrs P Townsley 6 8 7	—	100-1	150-1	100-1	100-1

Only 24 can run. Minimum weight: 10st. Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3, 4. (Sandown Saturday)

C - Coral, H - William Hill, L - Ladbrokes, T - Tote

Carlisle card under threat

PROSPECTS for tomorrow's meeting at Carlisle have deteriorated and the course will hold an inspection at 4.30 today.

The course has been waterlogged after heavy rain and snow and clerk of the course Jonnie Fenwicke-Clennell, who walked the track yesterday afternoon, reported the going as heavy, soft in places.

● Fiddlers Pike, the oldest horse to run this season, has been retired. Rosemary Henderson's 17-year-old was fifth in the 1994 Grand National. Henderson said: "He's off team chasing on Sunday and is also going eventing."

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Mr Busker
(Bangor-On-Dee 4.20)
NB: Elton Ledger
(Southwell 4.10)

Results

EXETER

2.20: 1. LOVELARK (M Griffiths) 14-1; 2. Golden Lily 20-1; 3. Bonny 8-1. 18 ran. 3-1 fav Urban Lily (6th). 22, 1. (R Brotherton). Tote: £20.90; £4.30, £8.50, £1.20, £23.90. DF: £280.90. CSF: £263.43. Tricast: £2,221.50. Trio: £226.60.

2.50: 1. NOT REALLY (Mr K R O'Ryan) 12-1; 2. Emperor Buck 9-2; 3. How To Run 33-1. 18 ran. 6-5 fav Bold Buster (pu). 18, 4. (Lady E Mays-Smith). Tote: £18.50; £4.90, £1.40, £16.90. DF: £48.00. CSF: £65.02. Trio: £307.20.

3.20: 1. WORKINGFORPEANUTS (V Slattery) 4-1; 2. Melwood Castle 5-1 jt fav; 3. Full Of Oats 11-2. 8 ran. 3-1 jt fav Hill Trix (pu). Dist. hd. (C Smith). Tote: £3.00; £1.10, £1.90, £1.10. DF: £5.70. CSF: £16.18. Tricast: £61.06. Trio: £13.00. NRs: Mammy's Choice, Now We Know.

3.50: 1. GARETHSON (J Culloty) 7-2; 2. Headwind 7-4 fav; 3. Holdimclose 100-30. 8 ran. 1¼, 1. (Miss H Knight). Tote: £4.20; £1.50, £1.60, £1.10. DF: £8.00. CSF: £10.30.

4.20: 1. EDMOND (R Thornton) 6-4 fav; 2. Bally Lira 33-1; 3. Looks Like Trouble 5-1. 10 ran. 29, 11. (T Forster). Tote: £2.40; £1.20, £3.50, £1.50. DF: £58.80. CSF: £51.68. Trio: £66.20.

4.50: 1. THE BREWER (R Bellamy) 4-1; 2. Rich Life 12-1; 3. Son Of Anshan 4-1. 7 ran. 2-1 fav Mutanassib (pu). 13, 15. (J Tuck). Tote: £5.40; £1.80, £3.30. DF: £22.00. CSF: £44.43.

Jackpot: Not won. Pool of £12,628.52 carried forward to Catterick today.
Placepot: £917.20. Quadpot: £7.80.
Place 6: £450.57. Place 5: £77.20.

LEICESTER

2.10: 1. REIGN DANCE (Mr T McCarthy) 11-4 jt fav; 2. Singh Song 12-1; 3. Dalametre 11-4 jt fav. 7 ran. Dist. nk. (Mrs D McCarthy). Tote: £2.70; £1.50, £5.60. DF: £16.80. CSF: £25.63.

2.40: 1. JUST BRUCE (Mrs F Needham) 9-1; 2. Native Venture 11-2; 3. Hawaiian Youth 11-4. 6 ran. 5-2 fav Eastern River (4th). 2, 2½. (Mrs E Heath). Tote: £11.10; £3.10, £1.10. DF: £19.90. CSF: £45.51.

3.10: 1. PONTABULA (Mr A Charles-Jones) 2-1; 2. Coolvawn Lady 11-8 fav; 3. Red Light 25-1. 5 ran. Dist. dist. (H Manners). Tote: £3.20; £1.80, £1.10. DF: £2.30. CSF: £4.68.

3.40: 1. TEETON MILL (Mr B Pollock) 11-10 fav; 2. Lord Relic 4-1; 3. Precarium 8-1. 8 ran. 1¼, dist. (Mrs C Bailey). Tote: £2.20; £1.10, £1.10, £2.60. DF: £6.30. CSF: £5.66.

4.10: 1. TRUE FORTUNE (Mr J Jukes) 8-11 fav; 2. Grecian Lark 15-8; 3. Wolver's Pet 7-1. 7 ran. 3, dist. (John Moore). Tote: £1.70; £1.50, £1.20. DF: £1.20. CSF: £2.35.

4.40: 1. PRINCIPLE MUSIC (Mr A Phillips) 6-4 fav; 2. Swordella 10-1; 3. Hallham Tarn 9-1. 9 ran. 9, 3. (Miss K Marks). Tote: £2.60; £1.20, £1.90, £3.00. DF: £14.90. CSF: £16.48. Trio: £52.20. NR: Seahi.

Placepot: £66.30. Quadpot: £2.50.
Place 6: £38.19. Place 5: £14.69.

SEDGEFIELD

2.00: 1. BRAVE EDWIN (G Lee) 14-1; 2. The Boozing Brief 5-1; 3. Rainham 25-1. 12 ran. 11-4 fav Members Welcome (6th). ¾, 4. (C Grant). Tote: £15.50; £3.40, £1.90, £3.80. DF: £68.30. CSF: £74.87. Tricast: £1,608.32. Trio: £216.80. NR: Praise Be.

2.30: 1. KITTOCHSIDE LAD (J Supple) 7-1; 2. Dockmaster 12-1; 3. Noddle 5-1. 11 ran. 9-2 fav Arctic Fox (5th). 2½, 1¼. (Mrs A Swinbank). Tote: £8.30; £1.90, £3.20, £1.90. DF: £54.30. CSF: £81.30. Tricast: £423.72. Trio: £109.10.

3.00: 1. LAST TRY (A S Smith) 12-1; 2. Dalleswhidden 6-1; 3. Shining Edge 4-1. 9 ran. 2-1 fav Brambleberry (4th). 1¾, 18. (B Rothwell). Tote: £11.40; £1.80, £2.10, £1.60. DF: £19.50. CSF: £71.66. Trio: £46.90.

3.30: 1. FOR CATHAL (L Wyer) 4-1; 2. Overflowing River 15-2; 3. Over The Deel 12-1. 11 ran. 2-1 fav Cropped Out (5th). 10, 9. (Mrs M Reveley). Tote: £4.20; £1.10, £3.10, £4.00. DF: £11.60. CSF: £30.82. Tricast: £303.08. Trio: £50.40.

4.00: 1. WOODBRIDGE (P Carberry) 11-2; 2. Gaelic Blue 6-1; 3. Owens Quest 2-1 fav. 8 ran. 5, sht hd. (F Murphy). Tote: £6.90; £2.10, £1.70, £1.40. DF: £11.60. CSF: £36.01. Tricast: £80.98. Trio: £33.20. NR: Bitacrack.

4.30: 1. INTO THE BLACK (P Niven) 6-7 fav; 2. Our Carol 20-1; 3. Sam Champagne 11-2. 16 ran. 2, 1½. (Mrs M Reveley). Tote: £1.70; £1.30, £3.40, £2.00. DF: £34.60. CSF: £34.40. Trio: £38.20.

5.00: 1. KIT SMARTIE (N Wilkinson) 4-1 fav; 2. Old Hush Wing 8-1; 3. Totem Fole 6-1. 15 ran. 1¼, 22. (D Forster). Tote: £5.80; £2.30, £2.20, £3.40. DF: £21.60. CSF: £34.04. Trio: £17.40. NR: Ivanadale.

Placepot: £307.00. Quadpot: £10.30.
Place 6: £218.83. Place 5: £48.23.

Bangor-On-Dee

HYPERION

1.50 Kadou Nonantais
2.20 Aghawadda Gold
2.50 Avanti Express
3.20 Riot Leader
3.50 WISHING WILLIAM (nap)
4.20 Mr Busker
4.50 Murray's Million

GOING: Chase course – Good to Soft; Hurdles – Good.
● Left-hand, undulating course; run-in 325yds.
● Course is 4m SE of Wrexham near junction of A525 and B5069. Buses from Wrexham station. ADMISSION: Paddock £10; Course £5 (u-16s free all enclosures). CAR PARK: Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: M Pipe — 26 winners from 86 runners gives a success ratio of 30.2%; G Richards 13 from 77 (16.9%); N Twiston-Davies 21 from 67 (17.9%); P Hobbs 8 from 27 (29.6%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: A P McCoy 12 wins from 50 rides gives a success ratio of 24%; C Llewellyn 11 from 59 (18.6%); W Marston 9 from 50 (18%); T Eley 9 from 93 (9.7%).
● FAVOURITES: 169 wins in 442 races (38.2%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Cwm Arctic (4.20), Specialize (visored) (4.50).

1.50 CHIRK 'NATIONAL HUNT' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) (Div I) £3,000 added 2m 1f Penalty Value £2,285

1	15	KADOU NONANTAIS (FR) (46) (D) (D & G Mercer) O Sherwood 5 11 8	J A McCarthy
2	121/F1	WYNYARD LADY (34) (D) (Lady Mee Hall) Mrs M Reveley 7 11 3	G Lee
3	33220	BEEFY NOVA (11) (Mrs S Tainton) N Twiston-Davies 6 11 2	C Llewellyn
4	033P	BUCKALOON (84) (A N Brooke Rankin) W M Brisbourne 6 11 2	R Massey (3)
5	0P	GREAT WOLF (26) (F E Phillips) T Wall 5 11 2	J Mogford (7)
6	F-4266	HIGHTECH TOUCH (12) (Mrs G Rowan-Hamilton) L Gossick 8 11 2	W Marston
7	35050	SLEETING (12) (Colin Moore) J Mackie 5 11 2	T Eley
8	56P0	SNOWBOY (28) (George Brookes) R Lee 6 11 2	B Fenton
9	6	MISS LAMBRINI (26) (Halewood International Ltd) D McCain 5 10 11	T Jenks
10	500	SPARKLING DOVE (23) (Cecil J Price) C J Price 5 10 11	O Burrows (5)
11		GRAND GOUSIER (FR) (Mrs G Leigh) T Forster 4 10 8	R Johnson

– 11 declared –

BETTING: 11-8 Kadou Nonantais, 11-4 Wynyard Lady, 7-2 Beefy, 12-1 Grand Gousier, Hightech Touch, 16-1 Snowboy, Sleeting, 20-1 Buckaloon, 25-1 Sparkling Dove, 33-1 others
1997: Daraktshan 5 11 8 J Culloty 8-11 fav (Miss H Knight) 14 ran

FORM GUIDE

KADOU NONANTAIS had little to beat when making a winning debut in a Hereford bumper, but he was impressive and also looked good making a winning bow over hurdles at Warwick, scoring by 18 lengths. Two and a half miles on soft ground at Haydock seemed to find him out next time when 20 lengths in fifth to Kings Measure. Back in distance, he is worth another chance to confirm the good earlier impression. Beefy Nova also flopped at Haydock last time, making most of the running to four out before fading into ninth of 19 in Aboo Hom's race. He had shown up well in two bumpers and two novice hurdles previously, finishing second of 18 to Hailstorm at Ludlow (2m 5f) last month, and there is no reason to suppose a shorter trip or better ground is needed. Dual bumper winner Wynyard Lady fell on her Musselburgh hurdling bow but made amends with a four-length success from Mr Tees Components at Kelso. She can win more races but needs to improve in this company. Hightech House has not lived up to a two-and-a-half-length second to *Ginger Fox at Warwick in two starts since, while Sleeting ran his best race over course* and distance when fifth to Racketball but struggles to stay the trip. Tim Fortser's French-bred Grand Gousier is one to note on this debut. Selection: KADOU NONANTAIS

2.20 CHIRK 'NATIONAL HUNT' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) (Div II) £3,000 added 2m 1f Penalty Value £2,285

1	1/41F	AGHAWADDA GOLD (12) (D) (The Ivy Syndicate) T Tate 6 11 8	G Bradley
2	0/	ALTHREY LEADER (1049) (F Lloyd) F Lloyd 6 11 2	S McNeill
3	3264-4	DAMIEN'S CHOICE (133) (M Sawers) Mrs M Jones 6 11 2	M A Fitzgerald
4		GILLEEN LAD (G Bodily) J Upson 6 11 2	Mr S Durack (5)
5	0-P	NOBLE ACT (11) (Miss C Dudley) B Baugh 7 11 2	Gary Lyons
6		PADDINGTON JONES (John Singleton) D McCain 5 11 2	T Jenks
7	2/	TREMALLT (674) (Bodfari Stud Ltd) T Forster 7 11 2	A Thornton
8	000	ADVENTURE PRINCESS (82) (I Norman) G Barnett 5 10 11	Mr K R O'Ryan (7)
9	05	CRIME STOPPER (84) (J Pointon & Sons) Miss S Wilton 5 10 11	B Powell
10		KENLEYMOUR (Miss M J Brown) W M Brisbourne 8 10 11	Mr R Walley (3)

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 8-13 Aghawadda Gold, 9-2 Damien's Choice, 8-1 Tremallt, 12-1 Gilleen Lad, 16-1 Crime Stopper, 20-1 Kenleymour, 25-1 Paddington Jones, 33-1 others
1997: See Division One.

FORM GUIDE

AGHAWADDA GOLD can make amends for his recent early Haydock fall. Fourth to French Holly on his debut at the same course, he scored easily from Snooty Eskimo at Kelso next time and should not need to improve. Damien's Choice, placed in bumpers last season, showed promise on his hurdling bow at Cheltenham in October when a running-on fourth to Blowing Rock, but he has not been out since. Tremallt was beaten just half a length by Barrier Express on his debut in a 17-runner Exeter bumper almost two years ago. Gilleen Lad could prove best of the rest. Selection: AGHAWADDA GOLD

2.50 CROXTON NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 1f 110yds Penalty Value £3,436

1	1P-1D4	AVANTI EXPRESS (46) (D) (Mrs Sarah Stevens) C Egerton 8 11 1	J A McCarthy
2	0-5260	*CENTAUR EXPRESS (46) (CD) (Centaur Racing Ltd) A Streeter 6 11 1*	T Eley
3	6254F	COOLINNY (11) (Champ Chicken Co Ltd) D McCain 9 11 1	T Jenks
4	P6F33-	GORDON (378) (Mrs C N Pitt) P R Webber 7 11 1	A Thornton B
5	000-5	SEVEN POTATO MORE (82) (Sir J Barlow Bt) Sir J Barlow Bt 8 11 1	J R Kavanagh
6	003F6F	SISSINGHURST FLYER (6) (Brian Clifford) R Dickin 6 10 10	D Leahy

– 6 declared –

BETTING: 4-7 Avanti Express, 7-2 Centaur Express, 6-1 Gordon, 16-1 Coolinny, Sissinghurst Flyer, 33-1 Seven Potato More
1997: Indian Jockey 5 11 5 A P McCoy 4-9 fav (M Pipe) 8 ran

FORM GUIDE

AVANTI EXPRESS, winner of a soft-ground Hereford novice hurdle last season, passed the post first on his return and chasing debut at Warwick, beating Melstock Meggie a length and a half, only to lose the race in the stewards' room. Avanti Express went on to be a close fourth to Wisley Wonder at Windsor, where he tried a longer trip, and a repeat of either run should be good enough. The danger is Centaur Express, making his chasing debut. He is a useful two-mile handicap hurdler (rated 110 when sixth to Brambles Way at Catterick last time) who acts on soft ground and hurdles well, so jumping should not be a problem. Gordon won a heavy-ground Catterick bumper three years ago and reached the frame three times over fences last season. He ought to be able to do the same here. Sissinghurst Flyer was going well when falling two out in Highland Flame's Lingfield race, but that was a weak novices' handicap. Front-running Coolinny may need more time to recover from a fall at Haydock. Selection: AVANTI EXPRESS

3.20 WREXHAM LVA NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 3m 110yds Penalty Value £3,713

1	-140P4	HOODWINKER (28) (D) (P A Howell) W Jenks 9 11 10	C Llewellyn
2	2-4343	RIOT LEADER (33) (The Riot Partnership) T George 8 11 3	R Johnson
3	-2P422	SEYMOURSWIFT (32) (BF) (Starlight Racing) D Gandolfo 8 10 12	G Bradley
4	P2-46P	JUST ONE QUESTION (83) (Anne Duchess of Westminster) J J O'Neill 8 10 7	A Thornton
5	U-0006	CHARLIE HAWES (42) (D) (Silver Knight Exhibitions Ltd) S Mellor 9 10 2	C Webb (3)
6	-64005	INTO THE WEB (25) (D) (F J Sainsbury) Mrs M Jones 7 10 1	B Powell
7	1-UPP5	BOURBON COUNTY (22) (D) (John Pointon and Sons) Miss S Wilton 8 10 0	D J Burchell
8	P0-540	CAPTAIN MY CAPTAIN (34) (The Ancient Mariners) R Brotherton 10 10 0	S Curran
9	P/505	BORO HILL (26) (D) (Roger Alsop) Miss P Whittle 9 10 0	K Hibbert (7)
10	2PFP/	FEICIM (1126) (Mrs L C Taylor) Mrs L Taylor 9 10 0	R Bellamy

– 10 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Bourbon County 9st 11lb, Captain My Captain 9st 11lb, Boro Hill 9st 10lb, Feicim 9st 1lb.
BETTING: 2-1 Seymourswift, 4-1 Riot Leader, 5-1 Hoodwinker, 6-1 Into The Web, 10-1 Boro Hill, Bourbon County, 12-1 Just One Question, 14-1 Charlie Hawes, 16-1 Captain My Captain, 25-1 Feicim
1997: Carbon Gold 8 12 2 J Osborne 4-5 fav (K Bailey) 14 ran

FORM GUIDE

BOURBON COUNTY could be the one. Winner of a maiden point in Ireland a year ago and runner-up in his previous two, he failed to complete on his first four runs over regulation fences but managed to get round at Leicester last time, beaten about 12 lengths in fifth of six to Colonel Blazer. That should have given his confidence a boost and, proven on soft ground and with improvement to come, he could go well at a price. Seymourswift, winner of a heavy-ground novices' hurdle at Newton Abbot last season, has run well on his last two starts, going down by half a length to Nattegrity off today's mark at Huntingdon and then being beaten 11 lengths by Carlingford Gale at Uttoxeter. That run seemed disappointing, but the winner followed up by 12 lengths in a Windsor handicap and Seymourswift has an obvious chance. Tom George, trainer of Carlingford Gale, runs Riot Leader. The eight-year-old has been running well over hurdles, last time in third to Arctic Fox at Catterick, and has a future over fences. Into The Web also makes his debut over fences and has been progressing in novice handicap hurdles, last time finishing fifth of 15 to Jennie's Prospect here, beaten eight lengths. Hoodwinker was beaten a long way in fourth to Hand Woven on his chasing debut at Ludlow. He gives away weight all round. Boro Hill has run well from out of the handicap before, including when winning at Ludlow. Selection: BOURBON COUNTY

3.50 HOLYWELL HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £6,000 added 3m 110yds Penalty Value £4,124

1	03-6PP	PARSONS BOY (18) (CD) (B Ridge & Mr D Hewitt) G Richards 9 12 0	A Dobbin
2	1F22/P	DO RIGHTLY (112) (M Fitzpatrick) M Bradstock 9 11 10	P Holley
3	4F5-P	JACOB'S WIFE (48) (C) (The Black Sheep Flock) P R Webber 8 11 3	J A McCarthy
4	2P312-	FOXTROT ROMEO (361) (D) (BF) (Lady Cobham) C Brooks 8 11 0	G Bradley
5	311/F	MERLIN'S LAD (28) (D) (H Messer-Bennetts) T Forster 9 10 13	J Culloty
6	10-112	WISHING WILLIAM (46) (D) (BF) (Executive Racing) Miss H Knight 8 10 0	J F Titley

– 6 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Wishing William, 2-1 Foxtrot Romeo, 6-1 Do Rightly, 7-1 Merlin's Lad, 8-1 Jacob's Wife, 10-1 Parsons Boy
1997: no corresponding race

FORM GUIDE

FOXTROT ROMEO failed by a short head to hold Orswell Lad on heavy ground at Newton Abbot first time out last season, so an absence of a year need not be a problem. He wound up last season in good form, winning a Towcester novice chase and finishing second to Judicious Captain in a valuable Uttoxeter novices' handicap. Wishing William landed a maiden and a handicap chase at Plumpton in November and December and ran Mountain Path to five lengths at Windsor last time. He carries just 10st and will be a danger to all. After almost two years off following a hat-trick in the spring of 1996, Merlin's Lad fell at the first at Ludlow last month and may still need the run today. Jacob's Wife gave no encouragement when pulled up on her Huntingdon reappearance, *while Parsons Boy is* out of form. Do Rightly, third at 40-1 in Nahthen Lad's Sun Alliance Chase at the 1996 Cheltenham Festival, was having his first run since and carrying 30lb more than his long-handicap mark when pulled up in Haydock's Edward Hanmer Chase in November. He has not been out since. Selection: FOXTROT ROMEO

4.20 HUGH PEEL CHALLENGE TROPHY HUNTER CHASE (CLASS H) £2,000 added 3m 110yds Penalty Value £1,467

1	FP-2P3	HIGHWAY FIVE (P11) (CD) (Lady Susan Brooke) Lady S Brooke 10 12 7	Miss E James (7)
2	643/46	FINCH'S GEM (12) (Mrs S Shone) Mrs S Shone 10 12 0	Mr R Walley (3)
3	2FP-U2	MOUNT SERRATH (P25) (Miss A Meakins) Miss A Meakins 10 12 0	Miss A Meakins (7)
4	2122-1	MR BUSKER (P36) (D) (C J B Barlow) P Morris 9 12 0	Mr C J B Barlow (7)
5	510-RP	ORTON HOUSE (P17) (D) (Mrs A P Kelly) S Kelly 11 12 0	Mr R Burton (7)
6	0F5-65	CWM ARCTIC (6) (Mrs B Brown) Mrs A Price 11 11 9	Mr M Jackson (7) B

– 6 declared –

BETTING: 10-11 Mr Busker, 6-4 Highway Five, 12-1 Mount Serrath, 14-1 Cwm Arctic, 25-1 Finch's Gem, Orton House
1997: Highway Five 9 12 0 Miss E James (7) 20-1 (Lady S Brooke) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

Highway Five landed this at 20-1 last year and his recent third to Split Second in a good Newtown ladies' race, staying on to be beaten just six and a half lengths, gives him a good chance to stage a repeat. He had returned with a six-length second to Busman over an inadequate trip at Ludlow (Cwm Arctic sixth and held) and the more emphasis on stamina the better as far his chance is concerned. In receipt of 7lb, MR BUSKER could just prove too strong for Highway Five. That rival was pulled up when Mr Busker finished a five-length second to Nodform Wonder over course and distance on his final start last season (Orton House well back in fourth) and he showed his well-being by scoring on soft ground on the point-to-point course at Wolverhampton on his reappearance. Mount Serrath at least managed to complete when well held by Merry Chieftain at Erw Lon last time. Selection: MR BUSKER

4.50 SANDY LANE NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,500 added 2m 4f Penalty Value £2,980

1	2F-460	JOE SHAW (25) (BF) (F Gillespie) Mrs M Reveley 5 11 10	G Lee
2	-40054	CORALETTE (25) (S A Brookshaw) S Brookshaw 8 11 4	A Dobbin
3	1233U4	*BLATANT OUTBURST (124) (J Pointon & Sons) Miss S Wilton 8 11 4*	*M Fitzgerald V*
4	P-0332	MURRAY'S MILLION (26) (Cotswold Connection) J Smith 6 10 12	Mr O McPhail (5)
5	033	SHILLING (26) (Milton in Mind Partnership (7)) Miss H Knight 4 10 12	J Culloty
6	381236	ZAHAALIE (USA) (26) (C) (Christian Wroe) J Pickering 6 10 11	Gary Lyons
7	6052/1	LITTLE SERENA (23) (D) (John Harriman) J Harriman 8 10 10	D J Burchell
8	-64102	DOVETTO (23) (J T Price) A E Price 9 10 10	R Johnson
9	P660-0	PALLADIUM BOY (55) (Palladium Ltd) M Pipe 8 10 7	A P McCoy
10	0/P50	ARIF (22) (Mrs Jenny Carrington) Mrs H Walton 6 10 6	Mr A Walton
11	0036/	CLUBS ARE TRUMPS (1058) (J Parfitt) P Rich 7 10 2	M Griffiths (7)
12	0050-6	MOLLIE SILVERS (119) (J K S Cresswell) J K Cresswell 6 10 0	R Massey (3)
13	0-0P	EAGER BEAVER (40) (The Mutley Crew) N Twiston-Davies 6 10 0	C Llewellyn
14	3FP	JOLLY JAMES (126) (Brigadier Racing) Mrs M Jones 7 10 0	B Powell
15	-UR6P0	PENNYAHEI (26) (Miss N Crow) S Brookshaw 7 10 0	X Aizpuru (3)
16	6/06-P	SPECIALIZE (P28) (Mrs Diane Smith) K Burke 6 10 0	R Thornton V
17	0F-00	JUPITER PROBE (12) (R Waley-Cohen) R Waley-Cohen 7 10 0	W Marston
18	50P0	BRONHALLOW (13) (Feerick/Cleak/Parks/Piper) Mrs B Waring 5 10 0	E Byrne B

– 18 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Eager Beaver 9st 11lb, Jolly James 9st 10lb, Pennyahei 9st 7lb, Specialize 9st 6lb, Jupiter Probe 9st 5lb, Bronhallow 9st.
BETTING: 9-2 Dovetto, 5-1 Murray's Million, 13-2 Palladium Boy, 7-1 Shilling, 8-1 Little Serena, Coralette, 12-1 Blatant Outburst, Eager Beaver, 14-1 Joe Shaw, Zahaalie, Specialize, 16-1 Jolly James, 20-1 Arif, Clubs Are Trumps, Mollie Silvers, 33-1 others
1997: Lough Tully 7 10 10 J Osborne 6-4 fav (F Jordan) 13 ran

FORM GUIDE

CORALETTE has run well on his last two starts over hurdles. First-time blinkers seemed to wake him up in the good staying race won by Unsinkable Boxer at Doncaster and he finished a highly creditable fifth of 22, beaten 18 lengths, with Arif and Eager Beaver pulled up. Coralette pulled hard when again wearing blinkers at Catterick last time but still managed to finish eight lengths fourth to The Khoinoa despite not jumping well. The blinkers are left off and, dropping in trip and with Tony Dobbin coming in for the ride, today could be his day. Shilling, third to Polar Prospect at Taunton, not surprisingly was well beaten behind Zafarabad at Newbury last time but is interesting in his first handicap stepping up in trip. Palladium Boy was 7lb out of the handicap when only seventh to Welton Arsenal at Wincanton, but he can do better and is Tony McCoy's only booked ride at the meeting. Little Serena overcame a 27-month absence to win a Hereford claiming hurdle by half a length from King Of The Blues, but it was a very weak race. Dovetto, a *heavy-ground winner at Exeter on New Year's Day, again ran well at Hereford last month* to be second to Funny Genie and can pose a threat. So can Murray's Million, beaten a length and three-quarters by Jennie's Prospect over course and distance last time, with Zahaalie eighth and Pennyahei well back in ninth of 16. Selection: CORALETTE

Catterick

HYPERION

2.00 Fassan 2.30 Flutterby Lady 3.00 Cuthill Hope 3.30 Recruitment (nb) 4.00 Danegeld 4.30 Callernoy 5.00 Kilcreggan

GOING: Soft (Good in places).
● Left-hand course, undulating and sharp. Not suitable for the long-striding horse. Run-in 240yds.
● Course is NW of town on A6136. Darlington station 14m - bus service to course. ADMISSION: Club £11; Tattersalls £7; Course £2.50 (under 16s free into all enclosures). CAR PARK: Reserved area £2, remainder Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Reveley 21-102 (20.6%), *M Hammond 17-131 (13%), Mrs S Smith* 12-82 (14.6%), G M Moore 11-79 (13.9%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: P Niven 27-100 (27%), R Garritty 20-104 (19.2%), A S Smith 13-82 (15.9%), B Storey 12-157 (7.6%).
● FAVOURITES: 130-379 (34.3%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Dance Melody (visored) (2.30), Stage Fright (3.00).

2.00 HORNBY NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m

1	6-U130	NOBLE NORMAN (29) Mrs M Reveley 7 11 7	P Niven
2	00	BIROTEX BOY (30) C Grant 5 11 0	E Callaghan
3	0	BUFFALO RIVER (28) K Morgan 8 11 0	A S Smith
4	000F0P	CHAN MOVE (46) W Smith 6 11 0	J Supple B
5		CHARNWOOD JACK (F85) M Todhunter 5 11 0	M Moloney
6	06	COURSE DOCTOR (12) G M Moore 6 11 0	J Callaghan
7	-03222	FASSAN (46) M Hammond 6 11 0	R Garritty
8	F21-5	FORESHORE MAN (25) B Rothwell 7 11 0	B Storey
9	200-	HONEYSCHOICE (365) M Hammond 5 11 0	D Bentley
10	65U00-	I'M TYSON (NZ) (315) R Johnson 10 11 0	K Johnson
11	P-P530	INYOUGOBLUE (25) H Alexander 6 11 0	Mr T J Barry (7)
12	PP0	POWER DON (22) F Coton 5 11 0	Mr A Sansome
13	022	RUSK (22) (BF) T Easterby 5 11 0	L Wyer
14	4-	SKYLIGHT (357) Miss K Milligan 5 11 0	R Guest
15	0	STORM VALLEY (123) Mrs S Bramall (bl) 6 11 0	D Parker
16	020	WELLINGTON STREET (11) T Easterby 5 11 0	B Harding
17	5	*KISSEL (25) S Kettlewell 6 10 9*	Mr C Bonner (5)
18	6/	SIT BACK (702) D Todd 7 10 9	A K Smith (7)
19	00	BRAVE MAN (18) M W Easterby 4 10 6	P Morris (5)
20	06	COLWAY RITZ (9) W Storey 4 10 6	R McGrath (3)
21		IMPERIAL LINE (F30) A Mulholland 4 10 6	R Supple

– 21 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Fassan, 4-1 Rusk, 5-1 Kissel, 6-1 Foreshore Man, 7-1 Noble Norman, 10-1 Colway Ritz, 14-1 Honeyschoice, 16-1 Course Doctor, Skylight, Wellington Street, 20-1 others

2.30 WEARDALE SELLING HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,500 added 2m

1	3330-	COUNT OF FLANDERS (483) K Morgan 8 11 7	A S Smith
2	0/	AQUASEEKER (1222) S Bell 8 11 0	K Johnson
3	50	ARCHIE-T (36) P Beaumont 5 11 0	B Grattan (5)
4	000000	DARK MIDNIGHT (11) D Lamb 9 11 0	J Burke B
5	00165	MEMBERS WELCOME (1) (CD) W Tinning 5 11 0	N Horrocks (5)
6		NAPOLEON STAR (F30) Miss J Craze 7 11 0	S Webster
7	2F/F0-	RINUS MAJOR (354) M Todhunter 7 11 0	M Moloney
8	06	SQUARE DEAL (FR) (27) S Bowring 7 11 0	T Dascombe
9	20	FLUTTERBY LADY (36) L Lungo 5 10 9	R Supple
10	4	FORGET PARIS (F44) B Rothwell 5 10 9	B Storey
11	0/0-FP	MISS BARTHOLOMEW (29) M Hammond 8 10 9	R Garritty
12	00	NICOLA'S PRINCESS (25) H Alexander 5 10 9	R McGrath (3)
13	66	NO PROBLEM JAC (F226) J J O'Neill 5 10 9	L Cooper (7)
14	0P	DANCE MELODY (13) G Oldroyd 4 10 1	J Supple V

– 14 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Members Welcome, 4-1 Flutterby Lady, 9-2 Count Of Flanders, 6-1 Square Deal, 7-1 Forget Paris, 10-1 Nicola's Princess, 12-1 Archie-T, 14-1 Miss Bartholomew, No Problem Jac, 20-1 others

3.00 PETER VAUX MEMORIAL NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 3f

1	41-331	CUTHILL HOPE (39) (D) Mrs S Smith 7 11 9	R Guest
2	P	BAYMAN (25) Mrs S Smith 7 11 2	R Wilkinson (5)
3	442P-4	CLAVERING (64) J Howard Johnson 8 11 2	B Harding
4	13-453	HARFDECENT (33) Mrs M Reveley 7 11 2	*P Niven*
5	235-	HYDRO (404) M Hammond 7 11 2	R Garritty
6	2-36FU	STAGE FRIGHT (46) F Murphy 7 11 2	E Callaghan B
7	3P-055	TRIONA'S HOPE (15) E Caine 9 11 2	M H Naughton (5)
8	F0U4-0	TWEEDSWOOD (15) P Beaumont 8 11 2	R Supple
9	4F3P	GYPSY RACE (46) M W Easterby 8 10 11	P Carberry
10	003633	FALCON'S FLAME (21) V Thompson 5 10 7	Mr M Thompson
11	000PF0	POLITICAL MANDATE (46) R Nixon 5 10 2	B Storey

– 11 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Cuthill Hope, 11-4 Harfdecent, 4-1 Clavering, 7-1 Tweedswood, 10-1 Hydro, 12-1 Gypsy Race, 14-1 Falcon's Flame, 16-1 Bayman, 20-1 others

3.30 RUDBY HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £3,000 added 2m 3f

1	30-000	GLENUGIE (22) G M Moore 7 12 0	N Bentley
2	3/2-53	BRACKENTHWAITE (14) A J Lockwood 8 11 8	Miss A Deniel
3	-50083	BORLEAGH PILOT (41) Mrs S Bramall (bl) 7 11 3	D Parker
4	00-UP6	RADANPOUR (30) J Howard Johnson 8 11 3	A S Smith
5	283615	SOLDIER MAK (13) (CD) J Mackie 5 11 2	E Husband (5)
6	-53253	TIP IT IN (25) (CD) (BF) A Smith 9 11 2	N Horrocks (5)
7	P012/P	BROAD OUTLOOK (14) (C) M Smith 9 11 0	J Supple
8	396321	RECRUITMENT (33) (CD) J Turner 5 10 12	R Supple
9	22401	IBN MASIRAH (25) Mrs M Reveley 4 10 6	P Niven B
10	-00821	CRABBIE'S PRIDE (8) (CD) Mrs S Smith 5 10 5 (6ex)	R Guest
11	*3-0F06*	*COURT JOKER (46) H Alexander 8 10 4*	*B Harding*
12	040/4-	SON OF TEMPO (331) Mrs K Lamb 9 10 0	Miss S Lamb (7)
13	3P-004	WATER FONT (63) J J O'Neill 8 10 0	R McGrath (3)
14	5064P	NORTHERN FLASH (67) J Haynes 4 10 0	B Storey
15	F000/	SUNDAY'S MAN (880) B Rothwell 8 10 0	A Currie (7)

– 15 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Son Of Tempo 9st 7lb, Waterfont 9st 5lb, Northern Flash 9st 2lb, Sunday's Man 8st 9lb.
BETTING: 3-1 Crabbie's Pride, 7-2 Ibn Masirah, 5-1 Soldier Mak, 6-1 Recruitment, 8-1 Glenugie, 9-1 Brackenthwaite, 10-1 Borleagh Pilot, 12-1 Tip It In, Radanpour, 14-1 Court Joker, 20-1 others

4.00 RABY NOVICE HUNTER CHASE (CLASS H) £2,000 added 3m 1f 110yds

1	321-2F	BLACKWOODSCOUNTRY (P17) T Sharpe 8 12 0	Mr C Mulhall (7)
2	032F-1	COOLE ABBEY (P11) Mrs C Moore 6 12 0	Mr L Temple
3	1121-1	DANEGELD (P31) David F Smith 7 12 0	Mr N F Smith (7)
4	1S2-23	INDIE ROCK (P18) R Tate 8 12 0	Miss F Needham (7)
5	2F-511	MOVING OUT (P24) V Dartnall 10 12 0	Mr J Jukes (5)
6	PU42-2	ROYAL BANKER (14) A Dickman 8 12 0	Mr A Parker (7)
7	6-PP53	ROYAL PALM (P11) V Thompson 6 12 0	Mr M Thompson (3)
8	122F-1	TOASTER CRUMPET (P26) Mrs P Robson 9 12 0	Miss P Robson (5)
9	1FP/F6	TWO GOOD JUDGES (21) S Coltherd 8 12 0	Mr S Coltherd (7)
10	23-1B3	HILTONSTOWN LASS (P24) T Walford 8 11 9	Mr R Walford (7)

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 15-8 Moving Out, 3-1 Danegeld, 100-30 Indie Rock, 7-1 Coole Abbey, 10-1 Toaster Crumpet, 12-1 Royal Banker, 14-1 Blackwoodscountry, 20-1 others

4.30 NEWBY NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 3m 1f 110yds

1	4-3P5F	FLAT TOP (46) M W Easterby 7 11 13	P Carberry
2	/4-431	LORD FORTUNE (33) (CD) M Hammond 8 11 9	R Garritty
3	UP6023	APACHE RAIDER (22) F Murphy 6 11 2	E Callaghan B
4	-3423F	GLOBAL LEGEND (22) J H Johnson 8 11 1	B Harding
5	0U2222	CALLERNOY (5) D Lamb 6 10 12	J Burke
6	*363026*	*FORTYTWO DEE (39) N Smith 8 10 8*	*M Sherratt*
7	5U-04U	FUNNY YE KNOW (92) F Murtagh 9 10 7	R Supple
8	402F20	TUDOR FELLOW (34) J Wade 9 10 6	A S Smith
9	60U000	GALE FORCE (22) P Beaumont 7 10 2	B Grattan (5)
10	6FP/UP	ASK FOR BARNEY (5) B Rothwell 9 10 0	B Storey
11	0000/P	HOWYOUDOING (29) S Kettlewell 8 10 0	S Taylor (5)
12	0/RJ5P	ABSOLUTE FOLLY (8) Mrs S Smith 6 10 0	R Wilkinson (5)
13	4405PP	QUIXALL CROSSETT (88) E Caine 13 10 0	M H Naughton (5)

– 13 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Ask For Barney 9st 10lb, Howyoudoing 9st 10lb, Absolute Folly 9st 6lb, Quixall Crossett 9st 5lb.
BETTING: 6-4 Lord Fortune, 3-1 Callernoy, 5-1 Flat Top, 7-1 Apache Raider, *10-1 Global Legend, Tudor Fellow, 12-1 Funny Ye Know, 14-1 Ask For* Barney, 20-1 others

5.00 TEESSIDE INTERMEDIATE OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,500 added 2m

1-	0	GALWAY (18) Mrs S Bramall 6 11 2	D Parker
2	6	HEADMASTER (11) F Murtagh 5 11 2	B Harding
3	4F42-	INCH WAY (297) J J O'Neill 6 11 2	R McGrath (3)
4		THE OTHER HALF L Lungo 6 11 2	Mr B Gibson (7)
5		HUNTLEY LANE P Beaumont 5 10 11	W Worthington
6	0	TWENTY WINKS (15) J J Quinn 5 10 11	L Wyer
7	0	CASTLEHILL STAR (11) L Lungo 4 10 8	R Supple
8		KILCREGGAN Mrs M Reveley 4 10 8	N Smith
9		LACONIC M Todhunter 4 10 8	P Carberry
10	0	ROCKY MY BOY (32) Mrs S Smith 4 10 8	R Guest

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Headmaster, 11-4 Kilcreggan, 9-2 Laconic, 5-1 Twenty Winks, 8-1 Galway, 10-1 Rocky My Boy, The Other Half, 12-1 Inch Way, Castlehill Star, 20-1 Huntley Lane

Southwell

HYPERION

1.40 Taylor's Pride 2.10 Nakhal 2.40 Greenspan 3.10 Palo Blanco 3.40 Heighth Of Fame 4.10 Bold Aristocrat 4.40 She's A Gem 5.10 Bank On Him

GOING: Standard. STALLS: 5f & 1m 6f – outside; rest – inside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.
● Fibresand surface; left-hand sharp, oval course.
● Course is 5m W of Newark. Rolleston Junction adjoins course. ADMISSION: Club £12; Tattersalls £6 (OAP members of course's Diamond Club £4, accompanied under-16s free). CAR PARK: Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: M Johnston 46-221 (20.8%), *S Bowring* 43-350 (12.3%), J L Eyre 35-252 (13.9%), R Hollinshead 35-378 (9.3%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: L Charnock 33-340 (9.7%), J Quinn 33-472 (7%), Dean McKeown 27-312 (8.7%), G Duffield 25-208 (12%).
● FAVOURITES: 525-1512 (34.7%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Wild City (visored) (2.10), Ajnad (visored) (3.10), Sandblaster (visored), (4.10), Ruths Gem (visored) (4.10).

1.40 HERON MAIDEN HANDICAP (CLASS E) (Div I) £3,500 added 1m 3f

1	234/5	MILTON (28) Mrs A Swinbank 5 10 0	G Duffield 7
2	050-	BUSTOPHER JONES (146) C Egerton 4 8 7	C Lowther (3) 4
3	02300-	GOLD CLIPPER (82) M Ryan 4 8 4	G Bardwell 9
4	600-32	ALDWYCH ARROW (9) (BF) M Bell 3 8 4	M Fenton 6
5	*22542-*	*PROTARAS BAY (82) P Gilligan 4 8 0*	*A Polli (5) 13*
6	000-33	BEAU ROBERTO (2) J Goldie 4 7 11	J McAuley (7) 2
7	0000-	AVRO AVIAN (J80) Miss J A Camacho 4 7 10	L Charnock 12
8	060-2	TAYLOR'S PRIDE (19) T D Barron 3 7 10	Martin Dwyer 8
9	60-020	LAKE ARIA (28) G Woodward 5 7 10	A McCarthy (5) 3
10	34-254	MARY LOU (19) M Channon 3 7 10	A Mackay 11
11	0500-0	RINUS MAGIC (12) E Alston 5 7 10	J Quinn 1
12	0-5050	PARONOMASIA (8) J L Harris 6 7 10	J Bramhill 10
13	0000-	LOOKINGFORLOVE DEL (113) N Callaghan 3 7 10	Doubtful 5

– 13 declared –

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. True handicap weights: Taylor's Pride 7st 7lb, Lake Aria 7st 6lb, Mary Lou 7st 4lb, Rinus Magic 7st 2lb, Paronomasia 7st 2lb, Lookingforlove Del 6st 8lb.
BETTING: 11-4 Aldwych Arrow, 3-1 Milton, 7-1 Bustopher Jones, 8-1 Beau Roberto, Taylor's Pride, 10-1 Protaras Bay, Gold Clipper, 14-1 Mary Lou, Avro Avian, 20-1 Lake Aria, 33-1 others

2.10 HERON MAIDEN HANDICAP (CLASS E) (Div II) £3,500 added 1m 3f

1	286-30	REGGIE BUCK (USA) (8) J L Harris 4 9 10	Dean McKeown 8
2	2650-0	JUNIOR BEN (8) M Sowersby 6 8 7	P Fessey (3) 6
3	24-002	NAKHAL (16) D Murray Smith 5 8 6	C Lowther (3) 11 B
4	224-30	RON'S ROUND (22) C Dwyer 4 8 2	D R McCabe 7
5	0-4354	SHEEFIN (16) J Parkes 4 7 13	J Quinn 1
6	/0000-	BURLESQUE (210) J Bethell 4 7 13	Martin Dwyer 12
7	406-5	LAST KNIGHT (11) M Channon 3 7 10	A Mackay 5
8	000-04	*DURGAMS DELIGHT (19) B Murray 3 7 10*	*A McCarthy (5) 2 B*
9	-53554	SIDNEY THE KIDNEY (7) M Ryan 4 7 10	G Bardwell 10
10	0/0-00	WILD CITY (USA) (12) R Marvin 4 7 10	S Righton (7) 13 V
11	P000/	ENDAXI SAM (316) N Littmoden 5 7 10	A Nicholls (7) 9
12	0/0-00	BALLYKISSANGEL (40) N Bycroft 5 7 10	L Charnock 4
13	000-	ASHANGEM (134) Bob Jones 3 7 10	F Norton 3

– 13 declared –

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. True weights: Durgams Delight 7st 7lb, Sidney The Kidney 7st 7lb, Wild City 7st 5lb, Endaxi Sam 7st 2lb, Ballykissangel 6st 10lb.
BETTING: 11-4 Nakhal, 9-2 Last Knight, 5-1 Sheefin, 6-1 Ron's Round, 8-1 Reggie Buck, 10-1 Sidney The Kidney, Durgams Delight, 14-1 Burlesque, 16-1 Junior Ben, 33-1 others

2.40 SWAN CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,000 added 1m 4f

1	-1212	GREENSPAN (14) (CD) W Muir 6 9 7	J Wilkinson (5) 5
2	1-1221	PRIVATE DESPATCH (16) (CD) M Quinn 8 9 5	A McCarthy (5) 2
3		EQUINOX (J699) A Jarvis 7 9 3	D Sweeney (3) 6
4	20-223	FILIAL (26) (D) J Pearce 5 9 3	K Fallon 3
5	536/55	QUESTAN (2) B Smart 6 9 3	J Stack 1
6	16-030	PRIX DE CLERMONT (40) (D) G Lewis 4 8 1	D Denby (7) 4

– 6 declared –

BETTING: Evens Greenspan, 9-4 Private Despatch, 9-2 Filial, 14-1 Prix De Clermont, 20-1 Questan, 25-1 Equinox

3.10 RAVEN HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,000 added 5f

1	000-21	KRYSTAL MAX (16) (CD) T D Barron 5 9 10	Kimberley Hart (5) 14
2	212331	FEATHERSTONE LANE (4) (D) Miss L Siddall 7 9 6 (5ex)	Dean McKeown 1
3	3421-	THEATRE OF DREAMS (313) (D) K Burke 3 9 4	D Sweeney (3) 6
4	606-00	INTIAASH (21) (D) D Haydn Jones 6 9 4	S Drowne 4
5	412-05	NOBALINO (51) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 4 9 4	J Quinn 3
6	-63533	CHEMCAST (4) (D) (BF) J L Eyre 5 9 3	T Williams 5 B
7	16-135	DIVINE MISS-P (15) (D) J Cullinan 5 9 3	K Fallon 11
8	23-682	PALO BLANCO (8) (D) G L Moore 7 9 2	G Duffield 7
9	0/453	AJNAD (16) (BF) R Marvin 4 9 2	T G McLaughlin 15 V
10	14-612	LA DOYENNE (20) (CD) C Booth 4 8 10	S Whitworth 9
11	0035-6	SHADOW JURY (60) (CD) D Chapman 8 8 6	A McCarthy (5) 13 B
12	52-222	PHANTOM RING (21) A Bailey 3 8 6	J Bosley (7) 10
13	43-241	MISS BANANAS (16) (D) T Bill 3 8 5	*N Carlisle 8*
14	-24510	SOAKED (2) (C) D Chapman 5 8 1 (6ex)	L Charnock 2 B
15	0-6143	GENERAL EQUATION (42) (CD) J Balding 5 8 0	*N Adams 12 B*

– 15 declared –

BETTING: 4-1 Krystal Max, 6-1 La Doyenne, 7-1 Soaked, 8-1 Divine Miss-P, 9-1 Ajnad, 10-1 Shadow Jury, 12-1 General Equation, Featherstone Lane, Palo Blanco, Phantom Ring, 14-1 Nobalino, Miss Bananas, 16-1 Chemcast, 25-1 others

3.40 PIGEON APPRENTICE HANDICAP (CLASS F) £3,000 added 1m 6f

1	60510-	TOTEM DANCER (144) (D) J L Eyre 5 10 0	P Goode (4) 14
2	600-30	NORTHERN MOTTO (2) J Goldie 5 9 6	D Mernagh 3
3	0506-2	HEIGHTH OF FAME (8) (C) J Hetherton 7 9 5	D Williams 9
4	00024-	CHARMING ADMIRAL (J34) Mrs A Swinbank 5 9 3	David O'Neill (4) 2
5	/6214-3	AJDAR (16) (C) (BF) Mrs S Lamyman 7 9 2	P Bradley 5
6	05-543	RAGAMUFFIN ROMEO (19) H Collingridge 9 8 8	R Ffrench (4) 8
7	0/060	KARADENI (21) R Hollinshead 4 8 6	S Clarke (5) 7
8	223340	HEAD GARDENER (8) (C) N Littmoden 4 8 5	A Nicholls 11 B
9	03200-	DULAS BAY (J118) M W Easterby 4 8 4	S Finnamore (4) 10
10	0-0014	CAROL AGAIN (12) (C) N Bycroft 6 8 3	S Righton 13
11	13460	COASTGUARDS HERO (8) (C) B Pearce 5 8 1	P Fredericks 6
12	*5PP-60*	*SEA GOD (J8) (C) M Chapman 7 8 0*	*J Fowle 4*
13	000/40	SCORCHED AIR (J19) Mrs S Lamyman 8 7 10	J Bosley (4) 12
14	00000-	EL NIDO (114) (CD) D Chapman 10 7 10	J Grantham (4) 1

– 14 declared –

Minimum: 7st 10lb. True weights: Scorched Air 7st 9lb, El Nido 7st 3lb.
BETTING: 11-4 Heighth Of Fame, 5-1 Ajdar, 6-1 Charming Admiral, 7-1 Carol Again, 8-1 Ragamuffin Romeo, 10-1 Northern Motto, 12-1 Totem Dancer, Head Gardener, Karadeni, 14-1 Coastguards Hero, Dulas Bay, 25-1 others

4.10 JAY SELLING STAKES (CLASS G) £2,500 added 6f

1	362141	BOLD ARISTOCRAT (16) (CD) R Hollinshead 7 9 12	F Lynch 10
2	426334	ELTON LEDGER (2) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 9 9 12	K Fallon 7 V
3	025-10	ICE AGE (37) (CD) R Williams 4 9 12	D Biggs 5 B
4	544534	AWESOME VENTURE (2) (C) M Chapman 8 9 7	D R McCabe 2
5	5-6260	MULLAGH HILL LAD (32) N Littmoden 5 9 7	S Whitworth 11 B
6	1300-	PURPLE FLING (172) (CD) D Chapman 7 9 7	A McCarthy (5) 4
7	000-00	MARGARETROSE ANNA (8) B Baugh 6 9 2	D Wright 6
8	100-05	SANDBLASTER (16) W G M Turner 5 9 2	R C-Boutcher (7) 8 V
9	0-	ANITA MARIE (144) M Johnston 3 8 2	J Fanning 9
10	000-66	RUTHS GEM (11) D Thom 3 8 2	J Quinn 1 V
11	04004-	STATELY FAVOUR (110) Miss J A Camacho 3 8 2	L Charnock 3

– 11 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Purple Fling, 3-1 Elton Ledger, 100-30 Bold Aristocrat, 5-1 Ice Age, 9-1 Mullagh Hill Lad, 10-1 Stately Favour, 12-1 Anita Marie, 25-1 Awesome Venture, 40-1 others

4.40 PEACOCK HANDICAP (CLASS F) (Div I) £3,000 added 3YO 7f

1	53-116	SHE'S A GEM (40) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 9 7	J Quinn 3
2	060-	MUJI (131) A Jarvis 9 5	D Sweeney (3) 5
3	43-085	ARM AND A LEG (25) C Dwyer 9 2	S Whitworth 8 V
4	4030-	KUSTOM KIT KATE (177) S Bowring 9 0	C Teague (3) 7
5	004-	HOLY SMOKE (161) J L Eyre 8 12	O Pears 4
6	324513	MISS SKYE (8) (D) B Pearce 8 8	A McCarthy (5) 6
7	000-0	CINDER HILLS (23) M W Easterby 8 7	T Lucas 1
8	0050-0	LUNCHTIME GIRL (33) J Bethell 8 4	S Drowne 2
9	006-36	RED RISK (40) P Harris 8 0	P Bradley (7) 9

– 9 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 She's A Gem, 4-1 Arm And A Leg, 9-2 Miss Skye, 6-1 Muji, 7-1 Holy Smoke, 8-1 Kustom Kit Kate, 9-1 Red Risk, 12-1 Cinder Hills, 20-1 Lunchtime Girl

5.10 PEACOCK HANDICAP (CLASS F) (Div II) £3,000 added 3YO 7f

1	40-134	SORRIDAR (4) J L Eyre 9 7	K Fallon 3
2	-05234	POETTO (28) J Hetherton 9 6	M Tebbutt 2
3	0200-0	SUPACALIFRAGILISTIK (14) J Balding 9 3	J Edmunds 4
4	000-00	TOP FLOOR (23) N Tinkler 8 13	Kim Tinkler 9
5	*006-3*	*BANK ON HIM (15) G L Moore 8 12*	*J Quinn 8*
6	000-24	ARCANE STAR (23) (BF) A Jarvis 8 9	A McCarthy (5) 6
7	000-00	LINNETSONG (47) (D) D Chapman 8 9	L Charnock 7 V
8	000-	LESLEY'S ADVENTURE (203) E Alston 8 4	C Lowther (3) 5
9	060-6	APPIAN DAME (16) D Murray Smith 8 2	P Fessey (3) 1

– 9 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Sorridar, 3-1 Arcane Star, 9-2 Poetto, 11-2 Bank On Him, 10-1 Top Floor, 14-1 Supacalifragilistik, 20-1 others

Tyson in second $100m lawsuit

Boxing

MIKE TYSON, who sued Don King last week, has now filed another lawsuit against two former managers, claiming they betrayed him via a deal that made King his exclusive promoter.

Tyson alleges that he lost millions of dollars because Rory Holloway and John Horne convinced him during a meeting in an Indiana prison visiting room in 1992 that he should make King his exclusive promoter. At the time Tyson was serving a sentence for rape.

Tyson claims the pair made an arrangement with King in which the promoter got a large percentage of his fight purses and promotional rights. The former world heavyweight champion has asked for $100m (£61m) damages, the same amount as he wants from King.

The lawsuit was filed on Monday in the Los Angeles Superior Court. Tyson claims that *Holloway, of the Nevada-based* Holloway Management Inc, and Horne, of the Beverly Hills-based Horne Entertainment Inc, made an arrangement with King where King got a large percentage of Tyson's fight purses and promotional rights. Tyson said that he did not realize that the deal gave Horne and Holloway about 20 per cent of his purses and King another 30 percent.

Tyson's suit alleges that Holloway and Horne also took $8.6m beyond the 20 per cent, violating their contract with him.

Horne responded by saying that the case would only prove that Tyson had "the greatest deal of any athlete in history. His charges are absolutely baseless," Horne said, adding that his association with King "did nothing but the absolute best for Mike Tyson financially."

● Two women are suing Tyson for $22m, claiming he verbally and physically abused them at a Washington DC restaurant. Both women feared "immediate bodily injury," the suit claims. They are seeking damages for assault, battery, defamation and emotional distress.

Johnson turns Varsity match Oxford's way

Hockey

By Bill Colwill
in Milton Keynes

Oxford University	4
Cambridge University	0

TIM JOHNSON, the Oxford substitute, will remember his first Blue as his University won the 98th Varsity match yesterday to reclaim the Deloitte and Touche Trophy with a comfortable victory.

After an opening 25 minutes in which Cambridge, with their acting captain, Ian Bateman, claiming the midfield, had the better of the exchanges, Oxford struck. Richard Arscott put them ahead with a splendid solo run as the Cambridge defence stood off.

Johnson arrived two minutes before the interval after Belgium's Thierry Gruslin had blocked Mark Darbon to concede a penalty stroke, which Johnson converted confidently. Thirteen minutes into the second half, he struck again after *Phil Outram had illegally* stopped a Tom Matthews' penalty corner shot. Matthews himself rounded off the scoring with a powerful penalty corner drive eight minutes from time.

Cambridge's fightback had been limited after the initial Oxford goal to isolated raids and a string of penalty corners.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY: L Crofts* (St Catherine's); D Eadie (St Edmund Hall); P Barker (Trinity), J Hodges (Queen's), J Boumphrey (Pembroke); M Darbon (Worcester), R Irvine* (Lincoln, capt), P Barker (Trinity); M Firer (Keble), R Arscott (Keble), T Matthews* (St Edmund Hall). Substitutes used: T Johnson* (Jesus), J Cutress* (Worcester), B Reumann* (St Catherine's).
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY: H Ward (Emmanuel); R Hudson (Jesus); O Brew* (Emmanuel), P Outram (Queens'), T Parr*; C Lipscomb (both Sidney Sussex), A Cotton (Jesus), I Bateman* (Emmanuel, capt), T Gruslin (Trinity); J Mayer* (St John's), M Stather (Homerton). Substitutes used: M Meredith* (Clare), T Young (Homerton), M Beckford (Jesus), I McClive (St Catherine's).
* *denotes Blue.*
Umpires: S Crisp & T Kelleher (both SCHUA).

● In the women's game, Cambridge came from behind with two goals from deflections by Nat Redpath and Elise Kelly to win a tidy game after Sarah Stirling had given Oxford the lead in the 20th minute.

Glen Wells, Calif) Singles, first round: N Kiefer

Graham sees future among big spenders

Defeat in the FA Cup last Saturday has highlighted Leeds' need for new players. **Phil Shaw** reports

THE SCENE is the Leeds United dressing-room around 5pm on Saturday, shortly after they were dumped out of the FA Cup by Wolves. George Graham walks round, telling each player in turn what he thought of their display – which, with few exceptions, was not much – before admitting he had also made mistakes.

Leeds' latest home defeat by modest First Division opposition in knock-out competition, their third in the 18 months since Graham succeeded Howard Wilkinson as manager, leaves another season in danger of disintegrating into disappointment and recrimination at Elland Road.

The Premiership table, in which Leeds stand seventh compared with finishes of 14th and 11th in the previous two years, is testimony to the improvement Graham has effected. But they go into tonight's visit by Blackburn Rovers with only three wins from 12 League matches. The natives who Alex Ferguson dubbed Europe's most intimidating crowd – though that was before the advent of the all-seater stadium – are restless.

As long as Leeds were still in the Cup, the disparity between expectations and achievements did not seem too wide. The manager's column in Saturday's programme was, with hindsight, strewn with famous last words. "We are not far away," said one, referring to the kind of team Graham wants. Another anticipated "a bright future". A third spoke of a "selection headache I'd love to have every week".

Afterwards, in attempting to explain the setback to reporters, Graham posed a rhetorical question: "How can you legislate for so many people failing to play to their potential at the same time?"

Perhaps, however, it was not merely a case of players underachieving, but of their lacking genuine quality in the first place. Graham inherited a side in serious decline. Almost all of the 1992 championship squad had gone, replaced by a mixture of cheap buys and free transfers, youth team products and expensive foreigners.

Having cleared out high earners such as Yeboah, Brolin, Dorigo, Palmer and Rush, as well as the home-grown likes of Ford, Couzens and Tinkler, Graham set about building his own team. He has bought almost exclusively at the lower-to-middle end of the market: five of his 10 recruits have been for £500,000 or less, with only David Hopkin, at £3.25m, costing more than £2m. Despite having questioned the success rate of overseas imports, he has yet to sign a single English player.

The squad is long on spirit, honesty and organisation, as evinced by their ability to fight back to win after being two and even three goals down. They outstripped last season's meagre goal tally by new year, possess an away record second only to Manchester United's and could still qualify for the Uefa Cup.

Unfortunately, endeavour can take you only so far, and Leeds remain bereft of class in vital areas. The most pressing need is for a natural finisher in the mould of Tony Yeboah or Ian Wright, who Graham bought for Arsenal, and for a creative midfielder to vary the speed and angles of attack in the way Gary McAllister did during Wilkinson's *annus mirabilis*.

Part of the attraction of Leeds for Graham was the fact that they had recently been taken over by a London-based leisure group, Caspian. The company had grandiose plans to tap their undoubted potential in a large, one-club city and, apparently, the resources with which to do it.

In reality, Leeds have not remotely competed with, for example, Chelsea, and have also been outspent by clubs such as Coventry and Sheffield Wednesday. Even before the Wolves fiasco, Graham was telling journalists he now needed to spend "big-time". The team, he said, was like an incomplete jigsaw puzzle. The missing pieces would not come cheaply.

Although Graham is not one to wave his chequebook around before the transfer deadline, which falls on 26 March, he will expect to have the requisite funds in place for a summer spree. Scrimping along is not his style. While he will not want to leave Yorkshire without proving a point after his enforced exile, he may not be inclined to stay if he senses his vision is not shared by the club's owners.

The Leeds chairman, Peter Ridsdale, insisted yesterday that there was no rift with Graham over transfer cash. "We have also outlined to him that if he comes to us and asks for sensible amounts of money – and he has already told us of the players he is after – then it will be made available for him to buy them," Ridsdale said.

There is, of course, a third strand to team-building, apart from buying at the middle and top end of the market. Wilkinson's legacy in terms of senior players may have left something to be desired, but the youth policy he set up could be about to furnish Graham with a handful of classy additions to what is one of the Premiership's smallest squads.

The Leeds team which won the FA Youth Cup against Manchester United five years ago is now scattered around the lower divisions, whereas Nicky Butt, David Beckham and the Nevilles became internationals. The latest crop, who hold the trophy and recently beat their manager's old club at Highbury to reach the semi-finals, are thought to have more chance of sustaining their promise. When Leeds beat Spurs last week, six of the side who finished the game were 21 or under.

As a student of football history, Graham is aware of how Don Revie built Leeds from a mediocre provincial club to a European power with a team who broke through from the juniors together. Although teenagers like Jonathan Woodgate, Lee Matthews, Stephen McPhail and Matthew Jones may soon join the Australian prodigy Harry Kewell in his side, it is financial clout that is likely to determine whether Graham stays to see them grow.

George Graham, the Leeds manager, has not signed a single English player for the Yorkshire club — Photograph: Ben Radford/Allsport

Extra finals tickets available

By John Lichfield in Paris

AN EXTRA 160,000 World Cup tickets, originally reserved for French fans, will be made available to national federations and individual foreign buyers, it was announced yesterday.

The decision, following legal pressure by the European Commission, should make several hundred extra tickets available to the Football Association and Scottish FA for England and Scotland's early round matches. It will also, in theory, make it possible for British fans to apply for the last batch of unsold tickets from the French allocation.

The decision followed a two-day workshop in Paris between Fifa, football's world governing body, the French organising committee and the 32 countries qualified for the World Cup finals in June and July.

Jacques Lambert, director general of the French organising committee, rejected criticism of the small number of tickets allocated to foreign fans. He said his committee had followed Fifa rules but the tournament had become a victim of its own success. "We have 2.3m tickets available and 2m requests. There is no way we can satisfy everyone."

None the less, Mr Lambert said the organisers of *France '98* had decided to bow to pressure from the EU, which declared the original system of ticket allocation to be offside under European competition laws. There are 160,000 tickets for individual first-stage matches reserved for French fans but not yet allocated. Some of these – it is not clear how many – will now be given to national federations to boost their otherwise meagre allowance (only 9,000 or so seats for English fans, for all three first-round matches). The rest will be placed on public sale, under new procedures which have still to be decided.

Not all World Cup coaches relish the choice of having only two goalkeepers in their 22-strong squads with a third on standby in case of injury, as was announced on Monday. Sepp Blatter, Fifa's general secretary, does not recommend the new ruling either. "If one of your goalkeepers is sent off and suspended you are left with only one for the next match," he said.

He told a news conference at the close of Fifa's World Cup workshop in Paris yesterday that a third goalkeeper would not be allowed to be in France awaiting a possible call.

Italy's Cesare Maldini said he would be bringing three goalkeepers to the finals. Maldini said it was unthinkable to have one goalkeeper training alone and out of touch with the squad. "He will land out of the blue like a parachutist [if he's called on]," Maldini said.

Fifa confirmed yesterday that tackling from behind will become an automatic red card offence from the World Cup onwards and that referees will indicate to the team benches how much injury time they will be adding on to regular time.

Players testing positive for recreational drugs such as cannabis or marijuana at the World Cup finals will be kicked out of the tournament, Blatter said. "You can call them recreational, but they're still drugs. And they will be banned," he said.

Lower divisions ready to assert rights

By Mark Bradley

LOWER DIVISION chairmen are determined to block radical proposals that would give First Division clubs more autonomy – laying bare the widening split between rich and poor within the Football League.

The chairmen of clubs in the Second and Third Divisions will formulate their own compromise plan over the next couple of weeks, which they hope the leading sides will agree to. But if it comes to it they will vote down the First Division clubs' existing proposals and are likely to take legal action if they try to form a breakaway group before the current television deal runs out in three years' time.

Representatives of the 24 teams in the First Division outlined their proposals at a meeting of their lower division counterparts in London on Monday. They want the power to negotiate the League's next TV deal, build bridges with the Premier League, have control over marketing and commercial activities such as finding a sponsor for the division, and virtually govern their own affairs – while staying within the League structure.

Any extra money they raise would be shared out between all 72 League clubs, but the top sides want an increasingly greater share as the pot expands because they are worried about the huge gulf which exists between the Premier League and the Football League. Not surprisingly the Second and Third Division clubs have huge reservations about the financial implications of the proposals, with some clubs warning that they could lead to smaller outfits going out of business.

They have even greater concerns about handing over power on issues such as promotion and relegation, with the proposals giving top clubs the authority to decide how many teams there should be in the First Division and how many sides are promoted to the Premiership each season.

John Reames, the chairman of Lincoln City, who has been appointed as spokesman for the lower division clubs, said: "No one is prepared to accept the proposals as they currently stand – but we need to be proactive and come up with a solution ourselves. We tend to be rather suspicious of their motives. If they achieve the financial rewards they believe are possible, then with the distributions they are putting forward the very gap they want to close between the First Division and the Premier League would open up between the First Division and the Second Division."

A committee set up by the Second and Third Division clubs is to meet tomorrow to start considering their formal response, and the matter will come to a head either at the League's extraordinary general meeting on 16 April or its annual general meeting on 6 June.

Newcastle complete £2m signing of Greek defender

NIKOS DABIZAS, a Greek international defender, completed his £2m transfer from Olympiakos Piraeus to Newcastle United yesterday after passing a medical test.

The 24-year-old central defender, who has 20 international caps, starred in his club's title-winning campaign last year and played for them in the European Cup this season. He has signed a four-year contract believed to be worth £1m and his arrival may put an end to Newcastle's interest in Bayern Munich's German international defender, Markus Babbel.

Sources in South America claim that Aston Villa have agreed a £2m fee with Colo Colo for the Chilean midfielder Jose Luis Sierra.

The 29-year-old is understood to be set to fly into Birmingham next week to formally tie up the deal with Villa. It was Sierra's defence-splitting pass which set up the brilliant first-half goal for Marcelo Salas in Chile's 2-0 friendly win over England last month.

Manchester City have signed Leeds United's veteran centre-half, Richard Jobson, on a free transfer. The City manager, Joe Royle, moved for 34-year-old after the news that the Georgian, Murtaz Shelia, is out for the season with knee damage.

The Benfica coach, Graeme Souness, is trying to raise the money to match Liverpool's £4m valuation of the Czech forward, Patrik Berger. He is selling the Dutch winger Gaston Taument to Anderlecht for £1.5m and has also listed the Swedish striker, Martin Pringle, at around £1m.

Sheffield Wednesday's new £1.75m centre-half from HJajduk Split, Goce Sedloski, has been granted a work permit by the Department of Education and Employment. However, the 23-year-old Macedonian international has yet to receive international clearance.

Millwall have appointed Steve Gritt as assistant manager to Billy Bonds. Gritt was sacked as manager of Brighton last month.

FA probes racism row

THE Football Association have stepped into the race row between Stan Collymore and Steve Harkness and ordered its own inquiry.

The FA has also reacted to a similar alleged incident between Scarborough's Andy Rhodes and Cambridge's Trevor Benjamin in a Third Division match on 10 January.

The FA moved in after failed attempts by the Professional Footballers' Association to sort out the row over alleged racist remarks made by Liverpool's Harkness against his former team-mate Collymore during the Aston Villa-Liverpool Premiership tie last month. Neither player was prepared to back down on his version of events.

The FA said last night it would be writing to both players and clubs to seek their observations. The statement continued: "Football is determined to rid the game of any element of racism and we will be seeking to get to the truth behind the allegations."

On the alleged incident in the Third Division game, the FA said: "Cambridge police have forwarded witness statements, taken from spectators, which allege remarks were made concerning Cambridge player Trevor Benjamin. We will be writing to both players seeking their observations."

Klinsmann backed by Ferdinand

THE turbulent internal politics at Tottenham took a fresh twist yesterday when the club's £6m striker, Les Ferdinand, sided with his attacking partner, Jürgen Klinsmann, in the unseemly public row over the best role for David Ginola.

Klinsmann has been at odds with the Spurs coach, Christian Gross, because he felt that the Frenchman was being played out of position and belonged on the wing. That led to an unseemly spat between the two, with the German striker announcing he would quit the north London club in the summer.

Yesterday Ferdinand, who played alongside Ginola at Newcastle before both players joined Spurs in the summer, added his support to Klinsmann's view.

"I think Jürgen mentioned the fact that David would probably be better on the wing, because that is where he feels we are going to get most benefit," Ferdinand said. "At the moment, David is playing fantastically well in the middle of the park but the forwards are not getting much service.

"I haven't scored that many goals this season, Chris Armstrong hasn't scored many goals and nor has Steffen Iversen. Jürgen has come over and he hasn't scored many goals, so there must be a problem with the supply to the front men."

Ferdinand said he felt Klinsmann was acting in the best interests of the team and that it was not his intention to cause disruption during a relegation battle. "I am sure that Jürgen was acting as a result of his own frustration and would not want to upset the team just for the sake of his own personal gain," he said. "Like he said, the coach has his ideas about how we are going to play games and what teams are going to win games.

"We are all professional and although people may not agree with team selections at times, we know we have got a relegation battle on our hands and that is what we have got to sort out.

"One of the frustrating things for Jürgen is that he hasn't been able to form a partnership with any of the other strikers," Ferdinand added.

"I haven't had a chance to form a partnership with him yet but I have started training again and hope to be back in the fold next week."

Tottenham, meanwhile, have appointed the former Notts County manager and coach to the Vietnam national side, Colin Murphy, as their new youth academy director.

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP Semi-final draw: Falkirk v Hearts; Rangers or Dundee v Celtic (Ties to be played weekend of 4 or 5 April).

Derby Storm worry over Windless injury

Basketball

By Richard Taylor

A THIGH injury has cost Tony Windless a place in the Dairylea Dunkers All Star game at Sheffield Arena on 22 March. But, more critically for his club, Derby Storm, the 6ft 5in American is now doubtful for several games in the run-in to the Budweiser League play-off quarter finals.

Windless recovered from a back injury last week, but damaged his thigh warming up for Saturday night's League game at Leicester City Riders, which Derby lost 97-88.

The defeat left Derby in 10th place behind Riders and Chester Jets, the other clubs bidding for the final play-off place who are joint eighth.

Even without Windless, the Derby coach, Jeff Jones, faces a difficult weekend at home to Sheffield Sharks on Saturday and at Birmingham Bullets on Sunday. Windless' place in the North All Star team against the South has gone to Leicester's 6ft 11in centre James Havrilla.

Today's fixtures

Football

7.30 unless stated

PA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Aston Villa v Barnsley (7.45)
Chelsea v Crystal Palace (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
West Ham v Manchester Utd (7.45)
Wimbledon v Arsenal (8.0)

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE
FIRST DIVISION
Middlesbrough v Swindon (7.45)

UNIBOND LEAGUE Premier Division: Winsford v Alfreton. First Division: Lincoln Utd v Harrogate Town.

DR MARTENS LEAGUE Midland Division: Raunds v Bagsley; VS Rugby v Ilkeston.

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE First Division: Canterbury v Ramsgate; Sheppey v Beckenham.

UNIJET SUSSEX LEAGUE John O'Hara League Cup semi-final: Langney Sports v Portfield.

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE Premier Division: Chippenham v Westbury.

JEWSON EASTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: Stowmarket v Warboys.

PRESS & JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE: Nairn County v Lossiemouth.

LEAGUE OF WALES: Aberystwyth v Cwmbran; Carmarthen Town v Newtown; Conwy v Bangor City; Ebbw Vale v Inter Cable-Tel Cardiff; Flint Town v Caernarfon Town; Porthmadog v Connahs Quay.

PONTINS LEAGUE Premier Division: Sheffield Wed v Birmingham (7.0); Tranmere v Nottingham Forest (7.0). First Division: Huddersfield v Port Vale (7.0); Oldham v Wolverhampton (7.0) (at *Boundary Park*); West Bromwich v Bolton (7.0) (at *Halesowen Town FC*). Second Division: Blackpool v Barnsley (7.0); Rochdale v Burnley (2.0); Rotherham v York (7.0). Third Division: Bury v Scunthorpe; Doncaster v Hull (7.0).

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division: Ipswich v Tottenham (7.0); Luton v Norwich (2.0); Portsmouth v Brighton (7.0); Southampton v Crystal Palace; Watford v Charlton; Wimbledon v West Ham (2.0) (at *Plough Lane*).

Rugby Union

REPRESENTATIVE MATCH: East Midlands v Barbarians (2.30) (at Northampton).

ALLIED DUNBAR PREMIERSHIP ONE: Gloucester v Wasps (7.30).

CHELTENHAM AND GLOUCESTER CUP Quarter-final: Bedford v Bristol (7.30).

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Thames Valley Tigers v Leicester Riders (8.0).

Other sports

BADMINTON: All-England Championships (Birmingham).

Weekend fixtures and pools forecasts

FA Carling Premiership

1 Aston Villa v Crystal Palace 1
2 Barnsley v Southampton 1
3 Bolton v Sheffield Wednesday 1
4 Everton v Blackburn X
5 Newcastle v Coventry X
6 Tottenham v Liverpool 2
7 West Ham v Chelsea X
8 Wimbledon v Leicester 1

Also playing: Manchester Utd v Arsenal (12.15pm). Sunday: Derby v Leeds.

Nationwide Football League
First Division

9 Bradford City v Birmingham 2
10 Huddersfield v Tranmere 1
11 Norwich v West Brom 1
12 Nottingham Forest v Bury 1
13 Oxford Utd v Stoke 1
14 Port Vale v Manchester City X
15 Portsmouth v Middlesbrough 2
16 QPR v Swindon 1
17 Sheffield Utd v Reading 1
18 Stockport v Ipswich X
19 Wolves v Crewe 1

Sunday: Charlton v Sunderland.

Second Division

20 Bournemouth v Wrexham 1
21 Bristol City v Bristol Rovers X
22 Burnley v Luton 1
23 Carlisle v Brentford X
24 Fulham v Millwall 1
25 Gillingham v Chesterfield 1
26 Grimsby v Walsall 1
27 Northampton v Blackpool 1
28 Preston v York X
29 Watford v Southend 1
30 Wigan v Oldham 2
31 Wycombe v Plymouth 1

Third Division

32 Barnet v Brighton 1
33 Cambridge Utd v Scunthorpe 1
34 Cardiff v Doncaster 1
35 Chester v Notts County 2
36 Colchester v Macclesfield 1
37 Darlington v Torquay X
38 Exeter v Hull X
39 Hartlepool v Swansea 1

Also playing (not on coupons): Lincoln City v Rochdale, Rotherham v Mansfield, Scarborough v Leyton Orient, Shrewsbury v Peterborough.

Bell's Scottish League
Premier Division

40 Dunfermline v Aberdeen X
41 Hearts v Kilmarnock 1
42 Motherwell v Rangers 2
43 St Johnstone v Hibernian 1

Sunday: Celtic v Dundee Utd.

First Division

44 Ayr v Airdrie 2
45 Dundee v Morton 1
46 Falkirk v Raith X
47 Partick v St Mirren 2
48 Stirling Albion v Hamilton 2

Second Division

49 Clyde v Inverness CT X

Also playing: Clydebank v Livingston, East Fife v Stranraer, Forfar v Stenhousemuir, Queen of the South v Brechin. Third Division: Albion Rovers v Cowdenbeath, Arbroath v Alloa, East Stirling v Berwick Rangers, Queen's Park v Dumbarton, Ross County v Montrose.

Four draws: Newcastle v Coventry, Port Vale v Manchester City, Carlisle v Brentford, Dunfermline v Aberdeen.

Five aways: Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Oldham, Notts County, Rangers.

Ten homes: Aston Villa, Nottingham Forest, Sheffield Utd, Wolves, Fulham, Watford, Barnet, Hearts, St Johnstone, Dundee.

Mannix decides to leave Sale

Rugby Union

SALE have put their New Zealand outside-half Simon Mannix on the transfer list after a disagreement. The 26-year-old goalkicker, who becomes eligible to play for England in 1999, has almost certainly played his last game for the Manchester club, who meet Wasps in the Tetley's Cup semi-finals later this month.

Mannix, whose stand-off place in the side for last night's Allied Dunbar Premiership match at Newcastle was taken by his compatriot, Shane Howarth, has been a key figure is Sale's success over the last two years.

He helped them to the Pilkington Cup final last May and was in the side that beat West Hartlepool last month to take them closer to a return to Twickenham.

Sale's chief executive, Howard Thomas, said: "Simon Mannix is a top-class player. Unfortunately, there are certain issues over which he and the rugby management could not agree."

The move is certain to alert a number of leading clubs, with Saracens expected to lead the way. They need a replacement for outside-half Michael Lynagh, who retires at the end of the season.

Mannix said: "It is a shame I'll be leaving because I have enjoyed my time playing rugby in the North-West and my family and I were made to feel very welcome by both the club and its supporters. I wish the club every success in the future."

Wasps' rugby director, Nigel Melville, yesterday challenged one of the most partisan crowds in English rugby to give the England captain, Lawrence Dallaglio, his second rough ride in successive matches.

The Wasps flanker was called "Judas" by a handful of the crowd at Saracens last Sunday and he can expect more of the same from occupants of Kingsholm's Shed tonight, when the champions visit Gloucester.

But Melville said: "We like the hostile environment and hope we can have the great satisfaction of winning away from home."

With Gloucester just in the top half of the table despite not playing for over two weeks and Wasps toiling in 10th place, there appears to be little meaning to the game.

But Dallaglio denied this, saying: "It's important to finish as high as possible... We've never come lower than seventh in the 10 seasons of league rugby and we want don't want to let down that fine record."

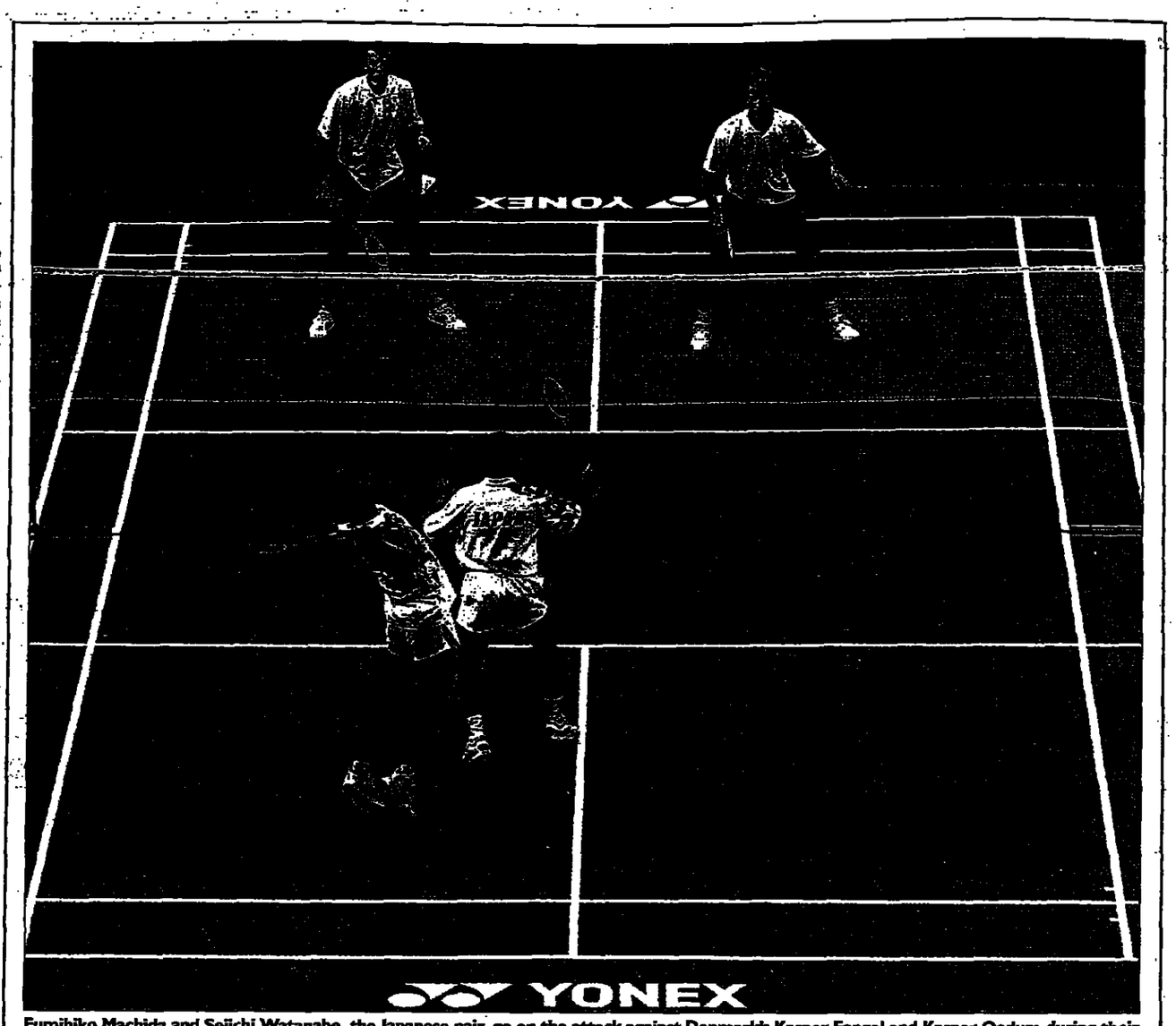
Gloucester – who have won six of their last seven home League games, but have beaten Wasps only three times in 15 meetings – and Wasps both restore international threequarters after long-term groin injuries.

Philippe Saint-André, the former France captain, returns for Gloucester after having one short outing in January, also against Wasps, when he suffered a recurrence of his November problem.

Richard Hill, Gloucester's rugby director, said: "Philippe has been struggling for four months and we were not going to rush him after the setback in January."

The Ireland centre Rob Henderson is back in Wasps' midfield for the first time since December, having confirmed his recovery in Paris last Saturday.

Henderson's recall means that Nick Greenstock moves to the wing, while Wasps also start with hooker Trevor Leota and back-row forward Johnny Ions.



Fumihiko Machida and Seiichi Watanabe, the Japanese pair, go on the attack against Denmark's Kasper Fangel and Kasper Oedum during their doubles match in the qualifying event of the All-England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham yesterday Photograph: Peter Jay

Keighley call on Crooks as coach

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

KEIGHLEY have replaced their coach, John Kain, four matches into the First Division season, paving the way for the return to the game of Lee Crooks. The former Great Britain forward is set to be named today as the new boss of a team without a League win this year.

Crooks has been out of the game since his contract as an assistant coach at Castleford expired at the end of last season: he had retired as a player mid-way through the campaign.

Crooks has been desperate to get his start in coaching, but last night month turned down an offer from the ambitious amateur club, the Oxford Cavaliers, to coach them on a part-time basis, in the hope that a full-time role would crop up elsewhere.

He now appears to have beaten John Joyner, who was replaced as Castleford coach last year, for the difficult job of reviving Keighley, whose recent financial crises have weakened their playing staff to the point where they are struggling to compete in the First Division. Kain is likely to stay at Keighley in some capacity.

All four games so far this season have been lost, culminating in a 50-12 thrashing at Dewsbury on Sunday.

The Castleford-based referee, Steve Presley, has been left on the sidelines for the quarter-finals of the Challenge Cup this weekend, after complaints from Halifax about his handling of their tie against the London Broncos in the last round.

Halifax lost 21-18 in a match of several controversial tries, after which two London forwards, Terry Matterson and Peter Gill, were sent letters from the League warning them about their future conduct.

A five-match tour by New Zealand will bring the British season to an end with an international flavour in November.

A meeting of the Test-playing nations in Australia has confirmed that the scheduled World Cup in Australasia this autumn will be postponed until the situation in the southern hemisphere – where a unified competition kicks off this weekend – has settled down.

Huddersfield, Watford and Bolton have been earmarked as the likely venues for the three Tests, but the Kiwis have warned that they will be reluctant to play any extra games outside the code's heartland as missionary exercises.

Scottish rule thwarted by Newman

Bowls

ROBERT NEWMAN prevented a Scottish clean sweep at the British Home Championships in Swansea yesterday when the Reading bowler won the indoor singles title by beating Sandy Syme 21-11.

The Scottish champion from Coatbridge took an early 5-2 lead after four ends but then lost two successive maximum fours on the next two ends to allow Newman, the 22-year-old from the Whiteknights club, to jump into a 10-5 lead.

The Scot did narrow the gap to 10-13 after 12 ends but then Newman stepped up a gear and a run of one, two and three took him 19-10 ahead after 15 ends and a double two ends later sealed his 21-11 win.

Scotland claimed the opening two finals at the championships when they captured both the pairs and triples titles. In the triples, Willie and Darren Burnett with Doug Farquharson, from Arbroath, beat another father and son pairing, Harry and John Price, with Stephen Rees, 24-14.

In the pairs, Richard Corsie, the holder of the Scottish and world pairs titles, added the British version for a unique treble when he came from behind with Willie Galloway to beat David Harding and Jason Greenslade, from Cardiff, 19-18.

Umpires hasten Indian win

Cricket

India 257 & 418-4 dec
Australia 328 & 168
India won by 179 runs

CONTROVERSIAL umpiring combined with potent Indian spin bowling sent Australia crashing to defeat yesterday in the first Test in Madras.

The tourists, facing a stiff victory target of 348, collapsed from their overnight score of 31 for 3 to 168 all out 45 minutes before tea on the final day.

The leg-spinner Anil Kumble wrecked Australia's second innings with 4 for 51 to finish with eight wickets in the match. The left-arm spinner Venkatapathy Raju chipped in with 3 for 26 while the off-spinner Rajesh Chauhan made his mark with 2 for 66.

India's 17th win in their last 26 home Tests was, however, marred by four controversial umpiring decisions in the morning session which ended Australia's resistance. Three of the dubious decisions were made by the English ampire George Sharp to leave Australia tottering at 96 for 7 at lunch.

It was the Indian umpire Srinivas Venkataraghvan, however, who began the slide when he ruled Mark Waugh caught at short leg off Kumble when television replays indicated the ball may have gone off the pads. The usually unruffled Waugh, who scored 18, stood his ground for a while before walking off with Australia 54 for 4.

Then the nightwatchman Paul Reiffel was given out caught at gully by Sharp when replays showed the ball hit his front boot. It soon became 91 for 6 when Sharp ruled Ricky Ponting leg before to Venkatapathy Raju for two despite replays indicating the ball clearly pitched outside the leg stump.

Australia suffered their worst blow off the last delivery before lunch when Steve Waugh fell to another dubious decision by Sharp on 27. He played forward to Venkatapathy Raju and the ball again appeared to go off the boot to Rahul Dravid at short leg, who won his appeal for a catch.

Ian Healy, the top scorer with 90 in the first innings, delayed the end with another defiant knock of 32 not out. Healy put on 57 for the eighth wicket with Shane Warne, who made 35, before Chauhan set Australia back again with two wickets off successive balls, with Warne caught by Kumble and then Gavin Robertson bowled first ball.

First day: India won toss.

INDIA – First Innings 257.

AUSTRALIA – First Innings 328.

INDIA – Second Innings 418 for 4 dec (S R Tendulkar 155, M Azharuddin 64, N S Sidhu 64).

AUSTRALIA – Second Innings
(Overnight: 31 for 3)

P R Reiffel c Azharuddin b Venkat Raju	8
M E Waugh c Dravid b Kumble	18
S R Waugh c Dravid b Venkat Raju	27
R T Ponting lbw b Venkat Raju	2
†I A Healy not out	32
S K Warne c Kumble b Chauhan	35
G Robertson b Chauhan	0
M S Kasprowicz c Srinath b Kumble	4
Extras (b4, lb3, nb4)	11
Total	168

Fall (cont): 4-54, 5-79, 6-91, 7-95, 8-153, 9-153, 10-168.

Bowling: Srinath 8-4-9-1; Singh 2-0-9-0; Chauhan 22-7-66-2 (nb4); Kumble 22.5-7-48-4; Venkatapathy Raju 15-4-31-3.

Umpires: S Venkataraghavan and G Sharp.

Final wicket for De Villiers as S Africa win

South Africa 293 & 206-7
Pakistan 106 & 134
South Africa win by 259 runs

SOUTH AFRICA duly completed a 259-run win in the third and final Test yesterday to level the series 1-1 after Pakistan started the final day in a hopeless position. Set 394 to win at St George's Park, Port Elizabeth, they began the day at 120 for 7 and after 35 balls and 14 runs their forlorn struggle was over.

Allan Donald took a wicket in each of his first two overs to finish with 4 for 27 runs before fellow quick bowler Panie de Villiers, in his last Test match, bowled Shoaib Akhtar to wrap up, the match. Donald had match figures of 8 for 74. De Villiers 8 for 48.

Azhar Mahmood, who was named man of the series after scoring 327 runs, including two centuries, at an average of 65.40, was ninth out after making 41.

Mark Boucher, named man of the match, claimed his ninth victim of the match behind the wicket when Waqar Younis edged Donald's second ball of the day, equalling the South African record for a match.

England likely to replace Tufnell with Caddick for fifth Test

ANDREW CADDICK is expected to replace Phil Tufnell, the slow left-armer, in England's team for the fifth Test against West Indies when the selectors meet today to pick the side for the match starting tomorrow.

The option of using Alec Stewart as a wicketkeeper and dropping Jack Russell has also been ruled out, sources close to the team said, leaving the quick bowler Caddick for Tufnell as the only likely change to the side beaten by 230 runs in the fourth Test in Guyana. West Indies lead the series 2-1 with two Tests left.

Caddick played in the first three Tests, taking seven wickets, but was left out of the fourth Test so England could play two spinners. Tufnell has taken only five wickets in four Tests, while Robert Croft took six wickets with his off-spin after coming into the side in Guyana.

West Indies have dropped their openers, Stuart Williams and Sherwin Campbell, and brought in Philo Wallace, the Barbados captain, and the veteran Clayton Lambert. They are also expected to replace Jimmy Adams with Roland Holder.

ENGLAND (probable 12; v West Indies, Bridgetown, tomorrow): *M A Atherton, A J Stewart, M A Butcher, N Hussain, G P Thorpe, M R Ramprakash, †R C Russell, R D B Croft, A R Caddick, D W Headley, A R C Fraser, P C R Tufnell.

WEST INDIES (from): *B C Lara, P A Wallace, C B Lambert, C L Hooper, S Chanderpaul, J C Adams, R I C Holder, †D Williams, I R Bishop, C L E Ambrose, C A Walsh, N A M McLean, D Ramnarine.

Sporting Digest

Agassi digs deep to defeat Woodbridge

ANDRE AGASSI, fresh from his second tournament victory of the year, defeated Todd Woodbridge in two tight sets to reach the second round of the Champions' Cup in Indian Wells, California.

Agassi, who ended a disappointing and frustrating 1997 ranked 122nd in the world, climbed to No 40 on the strength of his convincing victory over Australian Jason Stoltenberg in Arizona on Sunday.

With the 7-6, 6-4 win over Woodbridge, Agassi stretched his winning streak to 11 matches, during which he has dropped only one set.

The top eight seeds, led by the world No 1, Pete Sampras, have first-round byes in the tournament, the first of the Super Nine events of 1998.

Steffi Graf, trying to force her way back to the top, cruised into the quarter-finals of the Evert Cup, also in Indian Wells. Graf, 28, playing only her second tournament after a nine-month injury absence, needed just 46 minutes to overwhelm Japan's Ai Sugiyama 6-0, 6-1.

"I didn't think I would go out and play like that. It felt great. I was going for my shots, played very deep. It felt pretty good," she said.

Parrott praises defeated Fu

Snooker

JOHN PARROTT took the first step towards another triumph on foreign soil in Bangkok yesterday by beating a player he expects to make his presence felt soon.

Parrott reached the last 16 of the Thailand Masters with a 5-3 victory over Hong Kong's Marco Fu, but he was full of praise for his opponent.

"What a player he is," said the Liverpudlian. "I was extremely impressed by what I saw. He's going to be a real handful."

The Benson and Hedges Masters champion, Mark Williams, and Nottingham's Anthony Hamilton became the first two players to secure quarter-final appearances.

Williams scored a somewhat flattering 5-3 victory over Martin Clark while Hamilton reached the last eight of a world ranking tournament for the third time in his last four attempts by beating Fergal O'Brien 5-0. Williams now meets either Stephen Hendry or Tony Drago while Hamilton tackles Nigel Bond or Steve Davis.

Murray aims for the long run

Athletics

YVONNE MURRAY yesterday pledged to keep on running until the moment she feels she has stopped learning.

The Scot will defend her Commonwealth Games 10,000 metres title in Kuala Lumpur in September before focusing on a demanding switch to the marathon.

The 33-year-old's long-term target is to compete in her new event at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney – the fresh challenge she believes will prolong her distinguished career.

"The marathon is going to be a completely different event and it will mean going back to basics," Murray said. "I plan to run my first marathon of the season in October, having decided against the London Marathon.

"It was in my thoughts to run it, but we felt it was too early to go straight in against such a competitive field and I will leave it until next year. I don't think you ever stop learning. The day I stop learning is the day I will retire. When you are running you are never happy. I am my own worst critic."

Murray was in Glasgow yesterday to promote the launch of 'Commonwealth 200', which aims to raise much of the £180,000 still required to send a 200-strong Scottish team to the Games in September.

Basketball

NBA: Orlando 88 Philadelphia 78; Phoenix 134 LA Clippers 105; Utah 100 Houston 93; Golden State 93 Sacramento 88.

Bowls

BRITISH INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Swansea) Finals: Pairs: Scotland (W Galloway, R Corsie) bt Wales (D Harding, J Greenslade) 19-18. Triples: Scotland (W Burnett, D Farquharson, D Burnett) bt Wales (H Price, S Rees, J Price) 24-14. Singles: R Newman (Eng) bt S Syme (Sco) 21-11. Junior singles: J Henry (Ir) bt N Brett (Eng) 21-9.

Cricket

Martyn Moxon, Yorkshire's former England opener, has announced his retirement from the first-class game because of recurring injury problems after 17 seasons with the county. Moxon, 37, has decided to quit on medical advice after an operation on his back following degenerative disc problems. He will stay on at Yorkshire as director of coaching.

Sky Sports and the BBC will share coverage of the 1999 World Cup in an £8m television agreement announced yesterday. Both broadcasters will show the World Cup final on 20 June and are dividing up the other 41 matches in the tournament, which is being staged in England. There will be live coverage, too, of all matches on BBC radio.

Mike Smith, Gloucestershire's former England bowler, has agreed a new three-year contract with the county which will come into effect when his present deal runs out at the end of next season.

THIRD TEST (Port Elizabeth, SA) Final day: South Africa won by 259 runs.
(Pakistan won toss)

SOUTH AFRICA – First Innings 293 (W J Cronje 85, M V Boucher 52; Waqar Younis 6-78).

PAKISTAN – First Innings 106 (P S de Villiers 6-23).

SOUTH AFRICA – Second Innings
(Sunday: 94 for 2)

J H Kallis c Rashid Latif b Mahmood	69
H D Ackerman c Inzamam b Mahmood	42
A C Hudson b Waqar	4
*W J Cronje not out	7
S M Pollock b Waqar	7
†M V Boucher b Waqar	4
Extras (b1 lb6 nb10 w1)	18
Total (for 7 dec, 63.4 overs)	206

Fall: 1-17 2-92 3-170 4-185 5-187 6-198 7-206.
Bowling: Wasim Akram 18-3-37-0; Waqar Younis 17.4-4-55-4; Shoaib Akhtar 16-1-58-0; Azhar Mahmood 16-0-48-3; Aamir Sohail 1-1-0-0.

PAKISTAN – Second Innings
(Overnight: 120 for 7)

Saeed Anwar c Kallis b Donald	58
Ijaz Ahmed lbw b De Villiers	15
Inzamam-ul-Haq st Boucher b Adams	4
†Moin Khan lbw b Donald	1
Wasim Akram c Boucher b Pollock	5
Azhar Mahmood c Kirsten b Donald	41
Aamir Sohail lbw b Adams	7
*Rashid Latif c Kallis b Adams	0
Waqar Younis c Boucher b Donald	3
Shoaib Akhtar b De Villiers	2
Mushaq Ahmed not out	1
Total	134

Fall: 1-36 2-67 3-70 4-75 5-81 6-93 7-101 8-120 9-133.
Bowling: Donald 15-4-27-4; Pollock 17-2-48-1; De Villiers 12.5-4-25-2; Adams 18-8-36-3.
Umpires: R S Dunne (NZ) and R E Koertzen (SA).

Football

The England internationals Paul Gascoigne, Les Ferdinand and Ian Wright plus Wimbledon's Vinnie Jones will play for Jack Charlton's XI against a Republic of Ireland XI in Paul McGrath's testimonial match at Lansdowne Road, Dublin, on 17 May. Charlton's team will also include the League of Ireland players Eddie Gormley (St Patrick's Athletic), Tony McCarthy (Shelbourne) and Richie Parsons (Bray Wanderers).

David Kerslake, the former Tottenham full-back, has rejoined Swindon on a free transfer from Ipswich.

Crewe have released Jamie Moralee after the 28-year-old former Watford and Millwall striker asked for his contract to be terminated.

The Leicester defender Julian Watts has extended his loan spell with Huddersfield.

The Blackburn striker Chris Sutton has been named Carling player of the month for February.

The Doncaster striker Padi Wilson has been jailed for three months for driving while disqualified.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE Second Division: Postponed: Livingston v Queen of the South; Clydebank v East Fife.

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division: Arsenal 3 Swindon 0.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Re-arranged fixture: Wed 18 Mar: Newcastle v Crystal Palace *(from 4 Apr)*.

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE Re-arranged fixture: Tue 17 Mar: Watford v Carlisle United *(from 3 Jan)*.

Golf

SENIOR SLAM (Los Cabos, Mex) First round scores: 68 G Morgan (US). 71 H Irwin (US); 73 I Aoki (Japan). 80 G Marsh (US).

Hockey

MEN'S UNIVERSITY MATCH (Milton Keynes): Oxford 4 Cambridge 0. Old Blues: Oxford 4 Cambridge 0. Schools: Dulwich College 5 Radcliffe College 1.

Ice hockey

NHL: Washington 5 Calgary 2; Montreal 6 Florida 1; NY Rangers 2 New Jersey 2 (ot); Edmonton 4 Chicago 3 (ot); Tampa Bay 2 Colorado 1; St Louis 4 Vancouver 0; Los Angeles 4 Anaheim 3 (ot); San Jose 3 Toronto 2.

Ice skating

Tara Lipinski, the Olympic champion, will not defend her world title in Minneapolis this month. The 15-year-old American blamed tiredness and a throat infection for her decision. Meanwhile, the Germans Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer have joined the professional circuit and will not defend their pairs title at the World Championships, which begin on 30 March.

Paralympics

Britain's Peter Young failed in his attempt to win a third Paralympic medal when he finished 19th in the Nordic 10km freestyle cross-country skiing event at the Winter Games in Nagano yesterday. Young, 42, a blind piano tuner from Dagenham in Essex, has competed in every Paralympic winter games since their conception in 1976. Terry Ahrens, from Grantham in Lincolnshire, finished eighth in the same event.

Rallying

Ari Vatanen, the former world champion, will partner Juha Kankkunen for Ford again in the Rally of Portugal later this month in place of Bruno Thiry, who is still recovering after breaking five ribs before the Safari Rally in Kenya.

Rugby Union

IRELAND A (v Wales A, Limerick, 20 March): K Nowlan (St Mary's College); J McWeeney (St Mary's College), K Keane (Garryowen), M Murphy (Galwegians), D O'Mahony (Moseley); P Burke (Bristol, capt), S McIver (Garryowen); J Fitzpatrick (London Irish), A Clarke (Northampton), G Walsh (Garryowen), G Fulcher (London Irish), C Longwell (Ballymena), E Halvey (Shannon), K Dawson (London Irish), D Wallace (Garryowen). Replacements: J Cunningham (Ballymena), M Lynch (Young Munster), S Bell (Dungannon), D Erskine (Sale), B Cusack (Bath), G Leslie (Dungannon), S Jackman (Clontarf).

Sailing

Britain's Ben Ainslie yesterday moved to the front of the singlehanded field on the final day of qualifying at the ISAF World Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Ainslie led a field of 65 into the class finals, from which 20 qualify for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

Skiing

FREESTYLE WORLD CUP (Hundfjallet, Swe) Moguls: Final placings: Men: 1 J Ronnbeck (Swe); 2 D Gauthier (Can); 3 S Mustonen (Fin); 4 S Rochon (Can); 5= R Gay (Fr), J Gregoir (Fr), K Landsburgh (Swe), P Soerside (Nor). World Cup standings: 1 J Ronnbeck (Swe) 268pts; 2 F Dugier (Fr) 260; 3 J-L Brassard (Can) 244; 4 S Rochon (Can) 244; 5 K Landsburgh (Swe) 240. Women: 1 K Tina (Nor); 2 C Gig (Fr); 3 S Schmitt (Ger); 4 B Ballachey (US); 5= M Elfman (Swe), S Kerbot (Can), T Mittermayer (Ger), G Rauscher (Ger). World Cup standings: 1 C Gig (Fr) 298pts; 2 M Elfman (Swe) 288; 3 B Ballachey (US) 268; 4 K Tina (Nor) 244; 5 G Rauscher (Ger) 228.

Snooker

THAILAND MASTERS (Bangkok) First round: J Parrott (Eng) bt M Fu (HK) 5-3; S Lee (Eng) bt A Hicks (Eng) 5-3; M Williams (Wal) bt M Clark (Eng) 5-3. Second round: A Hamilton (Eng) bt F O'Brien (Ir) 5-0; S Hendry (Sco) bt T Drago (Malta) 5-1.

Squash

Jansher Khan has elected not to defend his Austrian Open title because of knee trouble. The tournament starts in Linz today.

Sumo

SPRING GRAND TOURNAMENT (Osaka) Third day (of 15): Gojoro (won 1, lost 2) bt Asanowaka (1-2); Mitoizumi (3-0) bt Kitakachidoki (2-1); Akinoshu (2-1) bt Asanosho (2-1); Asahiyutaka (2-1) bt Higonoumi (1-2); Maimouni (1-2) bt Kiyokutensho (1-2); Minatofuji (3-0) bt Hamahonkima (1-2); Aogiyama (2-1) bt Kotoinazuma (1-2); Tamakaiduga (1-2) bt Wakanojo (0-3); Takao (2-1) bt Tochinowaka (1-2); Oginishiki (1-2) bt Kotoryu (0-3); Takatorki (3-0) bt Kiyokuhuzan (1-2); Ganyu (1-2) bt Toseinoumi (2-1); Akinoshima (2-1) bt Musoyama (1-2); Kotonowaka (2-1) bt Tochiazuma (2-1); Chiyotaikai (3-0) bt Takanonami (2-1); Musashimaru (2-1) bt Shiokishima (0-3); Wakanohana (3-0) bt Kaio (2-1); Takanohana (1-2) bt Tochinonada (0-3); Akebono (1-2) bt Kotoishishi (1-2).

Table tennis

ENGLAND SQUAD (European Championships, Eindhoven, Neth, 23 April 23-3 May): Men: C Prean (Isle of Wight), M Syed (Berkshire), A Perry (Devon), B Billington (Derbyshire), T Young (Berkshire). Women: L Lomas (Bedfordshire), A Holt (Lancashire), N Deaton (Derbyshire), K Owolabi (Middlesex), H Lower (Staffordshire).

Tennis

COPENHAGEN MEN'S TOURNAMENT Singles, first round: F Dewulf (Bel) bt N Kulti (Swe) 6-4 6-4; M Sinner (Ger) bt M Damm (Cz Rep) 4-6 7-6 6-4; M Goellner (Ger) bt A Pavel (Rom) 6-3 3-6 6-7; M Tillstrom (Swe) bt D Nargiso (It) 5-7 4-6; D Prinosil (Ger) bt C Vinck (Ger) 7-5 6-3.

NEWSWEEK MEN'S CHAMPIONS CUP (Indian Wells, Calif) Singles, first round: N Kiefer (Ger) bt G Kuerten (Br) 6-4 6-7 6-2; S Bruguera (Sp) bt J Alonso (Sp) 7-6 6-3; M Washington (US) bt M Woodforde (Aus) 7-6 6-4; W Ferreira (SA) bt F Senzoro (Fr) 6-3 1-6 6-4; B Ulrrach (Cz Rep) bt M Filippini (Uru) 6-4 6-0; M Norman (Swe) bt A Corretja (Sp) 7-5 6-3; K Kucera (Slovak) bt D Hrbaty (Slovak) 6-4 1-6 7-6; T Muster (Aut) bt C Woodruff (US) 6-4 6-4; A Costa (Sp) bt F Mantilla (Sp) 4-6 6-4 6-3; C Pioline (Fr) bt M Rosset (Swit) 6-3 6-4; A Agassi (US) bt T Woodbridge (US) 7-6 6-4.

WTA TOUR EVERT CUP (Indian Wells, Calif) Singles, third round: M Hingis (Swit) bt M Babel (Ger) 6-2 6-0; S Cacic (US) bt S Testud (Fr) 4-6 7-6 7-6; N Zvereva (Bela) bt I Spirlea (Rom) 6-3 7-5.

Ten of Britain's most promising juniors will be given the opportunity to practice with Tim Henman and other leading British players at a 12-day LTA training camp in Miami from tomorrow until 23 March.

TRAINING PART: Senior men: T Henman (Oxon), A Richardson (Linc), C Wilkinson (Herts), M Petchey (Essex), D Sapsford (Surrey), M Lee (Sussex), L Milligan (Middx), A Farmer (Herts), N Gould (Avon), T Spinks (Norfolk). Senior women: L Woodroffe (Surrey), K Cross (Devon), J Pullin (Sussex), L Ahl (Devon), J Ward (Middx), L Latimer (Warwicks). S-A Siddall (Dorset). Boys: A Banks (Yorks), S Dickson (Cheshire), D Haldenby (Suffolk), A Macdin (Scot), T Peacock (Sussex), D Sherwood (Yorks), M Smith (Cheshire), D Belcher (Cheshire). Girls: C Carter (Norfs), J Choudhury (Cambs).

TODAY'S NUMBER

5.1m

The peak number of viewers who watched ITV's morning re-run of the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, about a million more than last year's Formula One season's opener. The race was watched live at 3.0am by 765,000, while 401,000 stayed up to watch Saturday's qualifying session live.

Rangers to let £3m Gascoigne go

Football

By Mark Pierson

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S days at Rangers were looking numbered last night after the Scottish champions agreed to sell their England midfielder to Crystal Palace for £3m.

Although the deal is far from done and Gascoigne himself has not even talked to Palace yet, it is clear that Dick Advocaat, who will take over from Walter Smith as Rangers manager in the summer, does not see him as part of his plans.

The proposed transfer has been agreed with Mark Goldberg, Palace's prospective new owner, who believes Gascoigne and Terry Venables, his former manager with Tottenham and England, can play major roles in the south London club's future.

Goldberg, who has an agreement to buy Palace by the end of the year provided he can raise the required £30m, yesterday gave Venables more time to think over an offer to become manager. However, he said that the signing of Gascoigne was not necessarily dependent on Venables' decision.

Goldberg has long been an admirer of Gascoigne – Palace's interest in him was first revealed in *The Independent* last October – and plans to meet the player early next week to discuss the move.

However, the prospect of joining a club currently bottom of the Premiership may have limited appeal for Gascoigne, who is currently out injured with a calf injury. Playing for a team embroiled in a relegation battle and without a home League win all season is not likely to help his preparations for this summer's World Cup.

Mel Stein, Gascoigne's advisor, last night played down talk of a move to Palace. "They may well have agreed a price in principle, but certainly Paul hasn't agreed to anything whatsoever," he said.

"Paul's view is that he simply wants to get himself fit first before he focuses on anything and at the moment he's very much a Rangers player. He's made no firm decision to leave Rangers, and certainly won't be making a firm decision to leave Rangers to go anywhere until he's fit. And that's going to be at least a week or so."

Rangers have agreed a fee of £3m, with further cash based on appearances. However, if the deal goes through it could cost Palace some £9m. Gascoigne agreed a new contract with Rangers last summer believed to be worth £40,000 per week over three years. A similar deal with Palace would commit the club to £6m in wages plus the fee.

Bearing in mind Gascoigne's poor fitness record – and the fact that Palace's prospects of Premiership survival this season have been hit hard by the lengthy absences of other injury-prone big-money signings – there will be many who will question the wisdom of the move.

Goldberg and Ron Noades, the Palace chairman, have been at odds over the future direction of the club and it was not clear last night whether Noades and the current manager, Steve Coppell, approve of the Gascoigne deal.

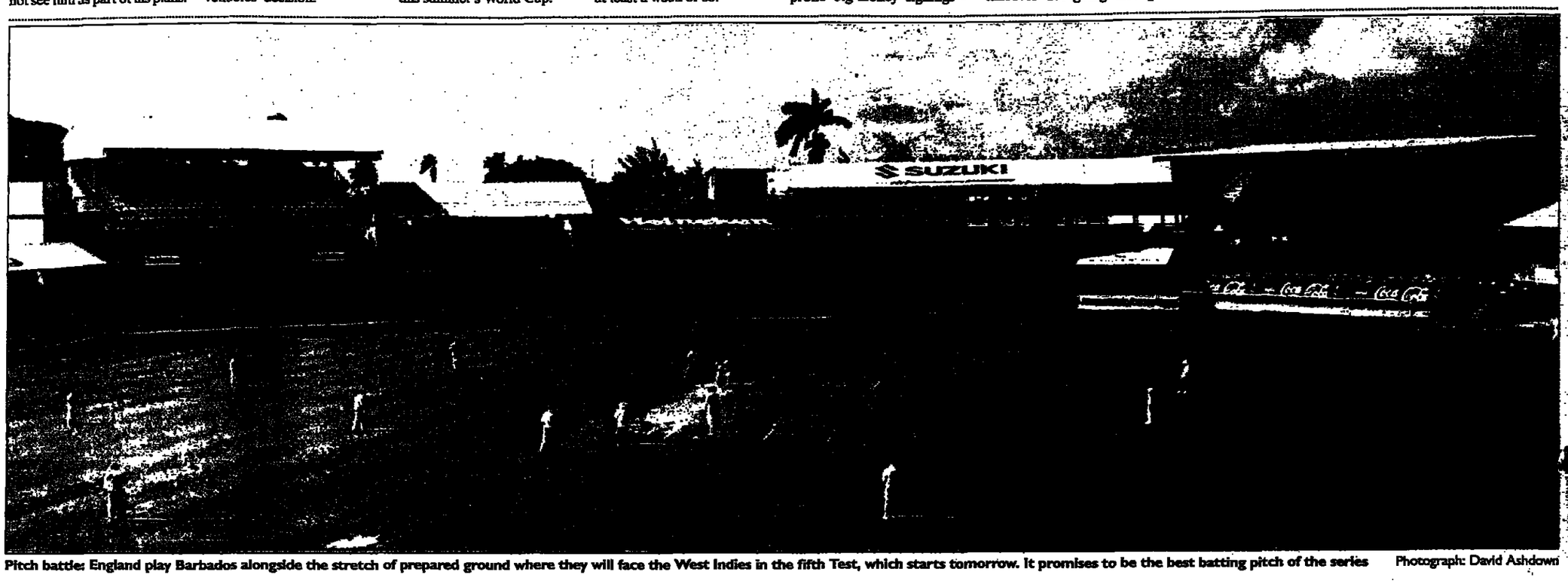
Noades had previously insisted that Goldberg himself should largely fund the move for Venables because he was not prepared to commit the club to expenditure it could not meet in the event of the Goldberg takeover not going through. Goldberg – who wants Coppell to stay at the club in a backroom capacity if Venables takes over – said last night that he would not sign Gascoigne "without first consulting Terry, the chairman Ron Noades and Steve Coppell".

Goldberg is believed to have discussed the Palace manager's position with Newcastle's John Barnes, but his first choice is still Venables, whose contract as coach of Australia expires this summer.

"I believe that with at least one more meeting, and possibly two, I will be able to persuade Terry to join us," Goldberg said. "I do not want to rush him into making a decision and end up with him saying no. We are making progress all the time."

Gascoigne: Palace interest

Graham aims to join the big spenders, page 26



Pitch battle: England play Barbados alongside the stretch of prepared ground where they will face the West Indies in the fifth Test, which starts tomorrow. It promises to be the best batting pitch of the series Photograph: David Ashdown

Spicy pitches prove scary for tourists seeking edge

Derek Pringle, in Bridgetown, explains how the West Indies have gambled successfully in preparing the local turf

IN CRICKET, nothing is more raked over, analysed, verbally dissected and generally worried about than the 22 yards of prepared turf known as the pitch. But whether they are fast or slow, bouncy or low, help spin or seam, pitches are a glorious uncertainty over which only the very best tend to have regular dominion.

Which is why the West Indies have risked playing England on helpful pitches, backing players such as Brian Lara, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh to outperform England's key players, a ploy that has seen them go 2-1 up in the series with two Tests to play.

One of the great myths about the Caribbean is that the pitches are fast and bouncy. In fact apart from Barbados – venue for the fifth Test tomorrow – the opposite is true, and most tend to be sluggish, the ball bouncing less evenly as the game wears on.

This tendency, especially after their bowlers' poor showing in Pakistan, left the West Indies with a dilemma. With two ageing but accurate fast bowlers, and a largely unblooded crop of young quicks, there was no point in having the slow, bland pitches that brought three draws against India last year.

Instead, knowing that Ambrose is still one of the best bowlers in the world when there is something for him in the pitch and that Walsh is not far behind, the surfaces have been under prepared. Although in the case of the first match in Trinidad, this was more from force of circumstance – after the first Test was abandoned – than by design.

Playing on spicy pitches has been a bold ploy and one that could so easily have backfired had England won the first – as they indeed should have done – as well as the second Test in Port of Spain. As it was, both teams left with a win apiece, with Ambrose and Angus Fraser, both written off in the months before the tour, reborn as match-winners.

In Guyana, however, the West Indies got the conditions just right. In Trinidad, the grass on the pitches had produced both lateral as well as vertical movement. But while this assisted Fraser as much as Ambrose and Walsh, the cracks and broken top of the Bourda pitch helped mainly the West Indies pair.

It is a variation at which local tall fast bowlers, with their extra height and pace, excel far more than their English counterparts, who cannot drive the batsmen on to the back foot often enough to gain advantage. Even when conditions are dusty, the home bowlers are far more effective than spinners, who, despite the occasional turning wicket, have rarely excelled in the Caribbean.

But if the pitches have not looked much worse than previous tours, a fact borne out by Fraser, now on his third tour, the balls, with their big, rope-like seams (a throwback to the 1989 ball that caused a furore when it was used in county cricket), have perhaps accentuated the variations present in the surface.

So far the batting, apart from Lara's glorious 93 in the last Test, has been anything but free-flowing. But if the popular conception of cricket is that people want to see batsman score runs, the purists will have been delighted at the gritty tussles between bat and ball so far seen in the series.

For those who would rather see runs than results, however, the pitches have been nothing short of bowlers' paradises. Unsurprisingly, it is a view that does not hold much truck with bowlers, and speaking about the strip England had just played Barbados on – a game that barely went into a third innings – a watching Fraser said: "People tell me that it's a good pitch. Well if it is, it has produced a dull game."

But if that sounds like the hard-done-by rantings of a cantankerous old warhorse, it is probably shared by England's batsmen, who know that although their personal averages would benefit from better conditions, England's chances of winning the series will not.

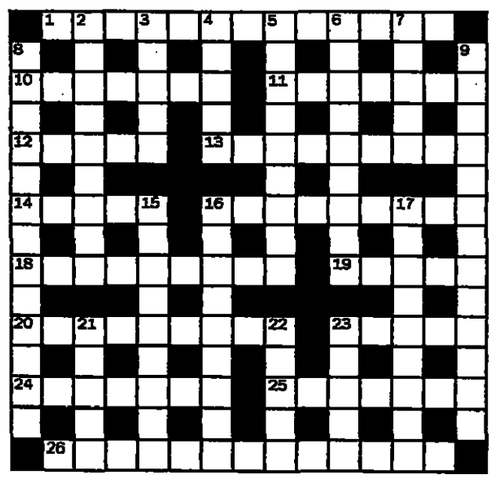
The trouble is, now that they have got their noses in front, the West Indies are bound to risk less on the pitches than they have done over the last few games. It is an irony that will not escape the openers, Stuart Williams and Sherwin Campbell. They were both dropped by the West Indies for the Barbados Test, a venue that will probably provide the best batting pitch of the series.

Yet if those selected in their place, the Barbadian Philo Wallace and Guyanese Clayton Lambert, are perhaps fortunate to have missed batting on the earlier pitches, cream still has a habit of rising to the top. Like it or not, the best batsmen on either side have all played significant innings, with Lara and Alec Stewart outstanding.

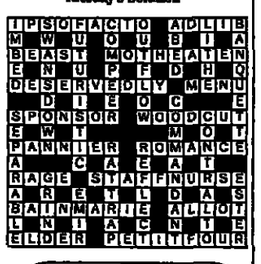
But if many would cherish seeing Stewart repeat his feat of four years ago when he scored a century in each innings, England's real chance lies in taking 20 West Indian wickets. If the Kensington Oval track is as good as local opinion suggests, that may be rather trickier than in previous Tests in the series.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3555. Wednesday 11 March — By Aquila



Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS

1 High tars used to bring people round (8-5)
10 Volume of a passenger-vehicle (7)
11 Cooked meal everybody knocked back, using thin plate (7)
12 Witch is retired close to lake (5)
13 How leading-men may be taken on board? (2,7)
14 Traded in softwood, square-ended (5)
16 Commonplace parking-space (9)
18 Beer I chat about but never touch? (9)
19 He run out leading India? (5)
20 A long way going by air, lorry and a railway (9)
23 United idols turning out (5)
24 The Independent, for example, given eagle form in it? (7)
25 Hooker, in the second half, takes a can of hair protein (7)
26 Mimics kicking man's posterior (13)

DOWN

2 European summit letting some people down? (4,5)
3 Flag of Lincoln standing between two lakes (5)
4 Kids comic perhaps? (5)
5 Expensive coating presented to winning lady at Wimbledon (4,5)
6 Charge made, these days, to go over embassy (9)
7 Here in Oklahoma, overturned baggage needs key (5)
8 Examination fee (13)
9 If this is served at table, keep sweet! (6,7)
15 Business style, to have dealings with famous person (5-4)
16 Particular stars in early elections in America (9)
17 Stuff of English composer in pure composition (9)
21 Splitter of beams? (5)
22 You know half will turn out in area of rushes (5)
23 Support for a proud walk (5)

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McGeechan breaks through impasse

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

KEITH BARWELL, the big bad wolf of Northampton, was enjoying life on the piste yesterday, which was quite a coincidence given that his club has spent the last week and a half careering down the slippery slope to public humiliation. In the absence of his multi-millionaire boss, Ian McGeechan took the only sane decision open to him and unilaterally called time on the political squabble that has reduced English rugby to a laughing stock.

McGeechan, one of the most respected coaches in the world game, intervened on behalf of Paul Grayson, Tim Rodber and Matt Dawson, the Saints internationals at the centre of the latest spat between club and country. Unless Barwell decrees otherwise from his temporary lair in the French Alps, the Franklins Three will make themselves available for this summer's tour of the southern hemisphere and save Clive Woodward, the England coach, the trouble of dropping them from the remaining Five Nations matches with Scotland and Ireland.

"Clive has said he will not pick anyone unwilling to tour and we as a club are not prepared to allow our players to be isolated in this matter," McGeechan said. "Nobody wants to jeopardise their international chances. I would fully expect Northampton players to be included in the England squad for the game at Murrayfield on Sunday week."

There was no response from either Woodward or the Rugby Football Union last night, but there was no question of the Twickenham hierarchy rejecting McGeechan's common-sense attempt at conciliation. Grayson is now virtually certain to retain his place at outside-half – injuries to Mike Catt and Alex King leave the stand-off cupboard worryingly bare – and Rodber, playing his best rugby for some years, will challenge Tony Diprose for the vacant No 8 slot.

Ten days ago – 10 days that seem like a decade – Barwell threw the whole England issue into the melting pot by banning his players from this summer's ill-conceived tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Woodward reacted in gunslinger fashion, firing off a salvo of threats and ultimatums that left no squad member in any doubt as to the consequences of withdrawal from the trip. As a result, all 12 Premiership clubs became embroiled in yet another round of shadow boxing with the union.

Although Barwell upped the ante by stating that rugby needed "a bloody good punch-up" to sort itself out, there was no escaping the fact that the entire England squad had signed up for the tour. His precipitate action left Grayson and company in the mire and pushed the clubs into a corner they would much rather have avoided. In short, he handed the RFU a public relations triumph on a plate.

McGeechan tried his level best to defend Barwell yesterday, saying: "Keith wanted to make the point that the players' interests were not being properly looked after and his sole purpose was to create a basis for discussion. Clive himself has admitted that this summer's tour is far from ideal." However, Northampton sources indicated that the coach was flabbergasted by the militancy of Barwell's stand and decided that if the owner was unwilling to break the impasse, he would have to do so himself.

Several club managements, Bath and Saracens included, were holding meetings with their players yesterday to appraise them of the latest political situation. "Northampton's climb-down means this particular issue is done and dusted," said one director of rugby. "There will be other issues, though. The next big fight will be over next season's England contracts, which will be put to the players in September."

Rugby union, page 27